

# HIV

## PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

### **What is HIV?**

*The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) damages cells in the immune (defense) system that helps to protect the body by fighting off infection and disease. As the virus gradually destroys these cells, the immune system becomes unable to protect against illness. Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the last stage of HIV infection.*

### **How is HIV spread?**

Getting HIV infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluids into your body can put you at risk. This includes having unprotected anal, oral or vaginal sex and sharing needles or drug works. You can't tell by looking at a person if they have HIV. An infected woman can spread the virus to her baby during pregnancy, delivery or through breast milk. However, with proper treatment the chance of passing the virus from the mother to the newborn baby is greatly reduced.

You cannot get the virus from:

- Casual contact with people who have HIV
- Tears, saliva, or sweat
- Handling objects that have been touched by someone who has the virus
- Donating blood
- Mosquito bites

### **Who should be tested?**

- If you have ever shared needles for injecting drugs
- If you know or suspect that your sex partner(s) have had multiple partners, used injection drugs, or had sex with prostitutes
- If you or your sex partner (s) have had a sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- If you have hemophilia or have had sex without a condom with a person with hemophilia
- If you have had a needle stick or other blood product exposure
- If you have had anal, vaginal or oral sex without a condom
- If you have had a blood transfusion between January 1978 and June 1985
- If you are pregnant (it is best to be tested before getting pregnant, if you have any of the above risks)
- If you have had sex with a prostitute or if you have more than one sexual partner.

**(Continued on Page 2)**

### **SYMPTOMS OF HIV**

The following symptoms can be caused by HIV *or other illnesses:*

- Constant tiredness
- Persistent fever
- Swollen glands
- A dry nagging cough and/or shortness of breath
- Continued loss of appetite
- Significant weight loss without dieting
- Diarrhea that won't go away
- Sores or rashes that won't go away
- Chronic yeast infections
- Night sweats
- Changes in memory or vision
- Unusual or persistent infections

**LIVINGSTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
2300 E. GRAND RIVER AVE., SUITE 102, HOWELL, MI 48843-7578  
(517) 546-9850  
www.lchd.org**

(Continued from Page 1)

## **How is it prevented?**

- Use a new, latex condom with a water-based lubricant every time you have sex. Condoms don't offer 100% protection but they do offer the best protection available.
- Have sex with only one person who is having sex only with you. The more partners you have the greater the likelihood of getting HIV or other STDs.
- Know your sex partner's history of STDs and drug use.
- Have regular STD exams and HIV tests if you are sexually active, more than one partner.
- Know your HIV status and the status of your partner(s). Consider being tested before having sex.
- Remember, you won't automatically be tested for HIV when you go for a medical exam. Ask to be tested if you're at risk.
- If you are a health care worker, follow routine barrier precautions, and handle needles and other sharps safely.
- Don't share needles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or razors that could be contaminated with blood or body fluids.
- Don't shoot drugs. If you do shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program. If you can't stop, NEVER reuse or share your drug works.
- If you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing, remember that you can get infected if the tools haven't been cleaned properly, or if the artist doesn't wear clean gloves with each new customer.

## **Where can I get tested?**

You can be tested free of charge at the  
Livingston County Department of Public Health  
2300 E. Grand River Ave., Suite 102  
Howell, MI 48843  
Call (517) 546-9850 for more information or to schedule an appointment.