



What does HIV antibody positive mean?

People who become infected with HIV develop antibodies (proteins the body makes to fight germs). Antibodies to HIV can usually be detected within two weeks to three months following infection with the virus. These antibodies can be detected by a blood test which should be followed up by a further test 12 weeks later.

When antibodies are found in the blood of people who are infected with HIV, these people are said to be HIV antibody positive.

Someone who is HIV antibody positive may not have AIDS, but they carry the virus and could pass it on through blood or by unprotected sexual intercourse.



What tests are available for AIDS?

Infection with HIV does not mean a person has AIDS. A diagnosis of AIDS is made only when the immune system breaks down, leading to infections and cancers. Diagnosis may require a number of special laboratory tests to be performed.

The HIV antibody tests show if a person has been infected with the virus. The test does not tell a person they have AIDS or will go on to develop AIDS.

It is important that pre-and post-test counselling are provided when you have the test.



Can AIDS be cured or treated?

Currently, there is no vaccine or cure for AIDS. However, there are new combination drug therapies available that work against HIV and are thought to delay progression to AIDS.

There are also treatments for many of the specific illnesses associated with AIDS. New drugs and therapies are being trialed all the time.



How do you catch HIV?

HIV can be transmitted by:

- **Unprotected sexual intercourse (anal or vaginal) with an infected person.**
- **Entry of infected blood into a person's bloodstream (such as when injecting drug users share needles, syringes and other injecting equipment).**
- **Occasionally from an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, at birth, or via breast milk.**

In Australia, HIV is most commonly transmitted by sexual intercourse without a condom, and through sharing of needles, syringes and other injecting equipment by injecting drug users.

There is no evidence available that HIV is transmitted by ordinary social or family contact.



What are the possible symptoms of AIDS?

Some of the more common symptoms of HIV-related illnesses are:

- **Extreme and constant tiredness.**
- **Recurrent fevers, chills and night sweats.**
- **Rapid weight loss for no apparent reason.**
- **Swollen lymph glands in the neck, underarm or groin area.**
- **White spots or unusual marks in the mouth.**
- **Skin marks or bumps (raised or flat, usually painless and purplish).**
- **Persistent or dry cough.**
- **Diarrhoea.**
- **Decreased appetite.**

These symptoms are common to a number of illnesses, including those related to HIV. If you have any of these signs (or any combination of them) for a month or longer for no apparent reason, you should consult your doctor.



What is the risk of catching HIV from having a blood transfusion in hospital?

Since May 1985, all blood donations in Australia have been screened for the HIV antibody. If you had a blood transfusion between 1980 and May 1985, you may wish to talk to your doctor about having a HIV antibody test.



Can I catch HIV when donating blood?

No. Needles, packs, swabs, finger-pricking lancets and so on are never re-used.



What is the government doing about HIV/AIDS?

The Commonwealth and State Governments are cooperating with community-based organisations to combat HIV/AIDS. This is occurring through treatment, blood screening, extensive education, research, training and counselling.



Where can I get information or help?

AIDSLINE

Tel: (03) 9347 6099, 1800 133 392, 1800 032 665 (TTY)

Hours: Monday to Friday 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday 11.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m., 7.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.

Telephone counselling, information and referral service.

MELBOURNE SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE

580 Swanston Street, Carlton 3053

Tel: (03) 9347 0244 (including TTY), 1800 032 017

Free testing, information, education, counselling, treatment.

Appointments preferred.

VICTORIAN AIDS COUNCIL/GAY MEN'S HEALTH CENTRE

6 Claremont Street, South Yarra 3141

Tel: (03) 9865 6700, 9827 3733 (TTY), 1800 134 840

Information, resources, referral, education, support, counselling, testing, treatment.

POSITIVE LIVING CENTRE/PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

46 Ackland Street, St. Kilda 3182

Tel: (03) 9525 5866

Support for people with, or affected by, HIV/AIDS.

THE CENTRE CLINIC

C/- Northcote Community Health Centre

42 Separation Street, Northcote 3070

Tel: (03) 9481 7155

Clinical services.

STD/BLOOD-BORNE VIRUS PROGRAM

Department of Human Services

GPO Box 4057, Melbourne 3001

Tel: (03) 9616 7777, Direct Line: 9637 4184

INFECTIOUS DISEASES & MICROBIOLOGY SERVICE

Alfred Hospital

Commercial Road, Prahran 3181

Tel: (03) 9276 2000

HIV/AIDS service, inpatient/outpatient treatment, testing.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES SERVICE

Royal Melbourne Hospital

Grattan Street, Parkville 3052

Tel: (03) 9342 7000

Inpatient/outpatient, treatment, testing.

SEXUAL HEALTH CLINIC

Mornington Peninsula Hospital

Hastings Road, Frankston 3199

Tel: (03) 9784 7777

Inpatient/outpatient, treatment, testing.

HAEMOPHILIA FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA

860 Nepean Highway, Moorabbin 3189

Tel: (03) 9555 7595

Information, support for people with haemophilia.

VICTORIAN INTRAVENOUS DRUG USERS AIDS GROUP (VIVAIDS)

765A Nicholson Street, North Carlton 3054

Tel: (03) 9381 2286

Information, education, resources.

FAMILY PLANNING VICTORIA

901 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill 3128

Tel: (03) 9257 0100

Information, education, counselling, testing treatment.

ACTION CENTRE (FOR YOUTH)

277 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000

Tel: (03) 9654 4766, 1800 013 952

Information, education, counselling, testing, treatment.

Rural STD Clinical Services

SEXUAL HEALTH FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC

The Annexe

Ballarat CHC

105 Humffray Street South, Ballarat 3350

Tel: (03) 5333 1635

STD CLINIC

Bendigo CHS

Seymoure Street, Eaglehawk 3556

Tel: (03) 5434 4300

STD CLINIC

Geelong CHS

40 Little Malop Street, Geelong 3220

Tel: (03) 5221 4735 Tuesdays – (03) 5226 7802

STD Clinic

Outpatient Department

Latrobe Regional Hospital

Princes Highway, Traralgon 3844

Tel: (03) 5174 9800 Tuesday nights – Direct line: 5173 8000



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HIV/AIDS

Your Questions Answered.