

## **What is HIV?**

To answer the question what is HIV AIDS, we have to start early in the epidemic. In 1985, scientists discovered the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and with it the question what is aids was answered. HIV is a virus that is transmitted from person to person through the exchange of body fluids such as blood, semen, breast milk and vaginal secretions. Sexual contact is the most common way to spread HIV AIDS, but it can also be transmitted by sharing needles when injecting drugs, or during childbirth and breastfeeding. As HIV AIDS reproduces, it damages the body's immune system and the body becomes susceptible to illness and infection. There is no known cure for HIV infection.

## **What is AIDS?**

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS, is a condition that describes an advanced state of HIV infection. With AIDS, the virus has progressed, causing significant loss of white blood cells (CD4 cells) or any of the cancers or [infections](#) that result from immune system damage. Those illnesses and infections are said to be "AIDS-defining" because they mark the onset of AIDS. Like HIV, there is no known cure for AIDS.

## **HIV/AIDS - More Than Just a Disease**

Soon after the emergence of the AIDS epidemic, it became evident that HIV was much more than just a disease. Unlike any other disease, HIV not only touches the lives of those infected, but it also impacts the lives of virtually everyone on earth. One would be hard pressed to find any group not affected by the HIV epidemic in some way. Simply put, it is clearly one of the most important public health issues.