



GEORGIAN BAY WOMEN'S CLINIC

HIV: What You Should Know

What's HIV?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It's a virus that attacks the body's immune system. If left untreated, it can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). There's no cure for HIV, but it can be managed with medication.

What Are the Symptoms?

HIV symptoms can vary, and some people might not have any symptoms for years. Here are some common ones:

Early Stage (Acute HIV).

- Fever
- Chills
- Rash
- Night sweats
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Fatigue

- Swollen lymph nodes
- Mouth ulcers

Chronic Stage

- Symptoms might not be noticeable, but the virus is still active and can be transmitted.

Progression to AIDS

- Rapid weight loss
- Recurring fever or profuse night sweats
- Extreme and unexplained tiredness
- Prolonged swelling of the lymph glands
- Diarrhea that lasts for more than a week
- Sores of the mouth, anus, or genitals
- Pneumonia
- Red, brown, pink, or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose, or eyelids
- Memory loss, depression, and other neurologic disorders

How Can You Prevent It?

Use Condoms: Always use condoms during sex. They help reduce the risk of transmission.

Get Tested Regularly: Know your status and that of your partner(s).

PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis): If you're at high risk, taking PrEP can significantly reduce your chance of getting HIV.

Avoid Sharing Needles: Don't share needles or other drug paraphernalia.

Safe Piercing and Tattoos: Make sure any piercing or tattooing is done with sterile equipment.

How Do You Get Tested?

Blood Test or Oral Swab: HIV is diagnosed through tests that check for antibodies or antigens in your blood or saliva. There are also rapid tests that give results in about 20 minutes.

How Is It Treated?

Antiretroviral Therapy (ART): This is the main treatment for HIV. It involves taking a combination of HIV medicines every day. ART helps reduce the amount of virus in your body, maintain your immune system, and prevent transmission to others.

Regular Monitoring: Regular check-ups and blood tests are crucial to monitor your health and the effectiveness of the treatment.

Follow-Up

Adherence to Treatment: Take your medications exactly as prescribed.

Regular Check-Ups: Keep up with regular appointments to monitor your health.

Healthy Lifestyle: Maintain a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and avoid substances that can weaken your immune system.

Remember:

- HIV is a manageable condition with the right treatment and care.
- Early detection and treatment are key to living a long, healthy life with HIV.
- If you think you might have been exposed to HIV, see your healthcare provider for testing and guidance.