

## **HIV / AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome)**

**What is HIV/AIDS?** It is an infection caused by a virus. Over time, it damages the body's immune system and other organs and can lead to severe, life-threatening illnesses. Symptoms include:

- No symptoms at all for years
- Failure to thrive, weight loss, fevers, fatigue
- Frequent infections (e.g., thrush, diaper rash, ear infections, pneumonia)
- Developmental delay and neurologic problems

**How does HIV/AIDS spread?** It spreads by blood, sexual fluids (semen and vaginal secretions), or saliva getting *into* another person's body by:

- Splashes of blood onto broken skin, eyes or mouth
- Sharing toothbrushes and razors
- Sexual intercourse
- Pregnancy, childbirth, and breast feeding
- Blood transfusions and sharing injection equipment

HIV has not spread by children playing together in early childhood programs.

**When is HIV/AIDS contagious?**

- Beginning after infection, with or without symptoms, and continuing for life.

**How do I know if my child has HIV/AIDS?** If you think your child is at risk or you see symptoms, see your doctor. HIV infection is diagnosed by special blood tests.

**What should I do if my child has HIV/AIDS?**

**Treatment:** Follow your doctor's recommendations:

- There are many medications to treat HIV and the other illnesses. Medication can prevent spread of HIV from mother to baby and improve health and survival.

**Should my child stay home?** Children with HIV/AIDS can attend school as long as they feel well enough to participate. Keep them home if they are too sick to participate, have oozing skin lesions that can't be covered, or other contagious conditions (e.g., active tuberculosis). To protect the child with HIV/AIDS from other diseases, get prompt notification of disease outbreaks such as chicken pox, measles, salmonella, and cryptosporidium, keep the child home, and consult your doctor immediately about possible treatment.

**To limit the spread:**

- Follow universal blood and body fluid precautions: Try to avoid direct contact with blood.
- Wear disposable latex or vinyl gloves for dealing with bloody injuries, bloody diarrhea, oozing skin rashes, and mouth or eye procedures. Clean and disinfect spills of blood. Seal bloodstained items in a plastic bag for disposal or laundering. Wash hands after removing gloves; wash skin after contact with blood.
- Don't share toothbrushes.
- Don't share injection equipment. If equipment is reused, disinfect it.
- Prevent sexual abuse.
- Between adults, use condoms during sexual contact.