

About HIV infection

What is HIV?

HIV infection is a viral disease that is transmitted through sexual contact, via infected blood, or from mother to child. Without treatment, the disease will eventually weaken the immune system, leading to various infections. The disease can be fatal without treatment. HIV is widespread throughout the world but is more common in some countries.

How is HIV transmitted?

The HIV virus is found in the blood and body fluids of the infected person. Infection through sexual contact is the most common mode of infection and occurs during unprotected vaginal and anal intercourse. Anal intercourse without a condom is considered to have the greatest risk. The risk of HIV infection increases if you also have another sexually transmitted disease.

HIV can also be transmitted by sharing syringes, needles or other user equipment when injecting drugs. Infection through blood transfusion occurred when blood donors were not HIV-tested. Rarely, HIV can be transmitted by blood coming into contact with mucous membranes or visibly damaged skin.

The risk of transmission from mother to child during pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding is approximately 30 per cent. This risk can be reduced to less than 1 per cent by treating the pregnant woman and the child in the first weeks after birth. All pregnant women in Norway are offered HIV testing.

Why is it important to be tested for HIV?

With today's effective treatment, most people with HIV infection can live a long life with a reduced risk of a severe disease course. It is an advantage to know whether you have been infected with HIV so you can begin treatment as soon as possible. Knowing that you are infected with HIV also means that you can avoid infecting others.

If you come from a country with a high HIV incidence of HIV, you will be offered a free HIV test. If you are uncertain of your HIV status, you can still request a free HIV test. Testing is voluntary.

What are HIV symptoms?

About 2-4 weeks after they are infected, some people (about half of those infected) will develop a primary infection, which will normally pass within 3 weeks. Symptoms may include fever, influenza-like symptoms with sore throat, rash and swollen lymph nodes. Most people who are infected with HIV have few or no problems until several years after infection. The disease can then cause a number of complaints due to various infections resulting from an impaired immune system.

How can you avoid contracting HIV?

The most important step to protect yourself against HIV infection is to use a condom during vaginal and anal intercourse. If you inject drugs, using clean equipment and syringes will protect against HIV.

What kind of follow-up will you get with a positive HIV test result?

When you take an HIV test, you will be offered a discussion meeting and counselling. If the test is positive (that means you are infected), you will be referred to a specialist in infection medicine and will be offered treatment.

Screening, testing, treatment and follow-up are free. Currently, there is no cure for HIV that can eradicate the virus, and treatment is life-long.

The test results will not affect an application for residence in Norway.