

Mayo Clinic - Infections common to HIV/AIDS

HIV infection weakens your immune system, making you highly susceptible to all sorts of infections and certain types of cancers.

Infections common to HIV/AIDS

Tuberculosis (TB). In resource-poor nations, TB is the most common opportunistic infection associated with HIV and a leading cause of death among people living with AIDS. Millions of people are currently infected with both HIV and tuberculosis, and many experts consider the two diseases twin epidemics.

Salmonellosis. You contract this bacterial infection from contaminated food or water. Symptoms include severe diarrhea, fever, chills, abdominal pain and, occasionally, vomiting. Although anyone exposed to salmonella bacteria can become sick, salmonellosis is far more common in people who are HIV-positive.

Cytomegalovirus (CMV). This common herpes virus is transmitted in body fluids such as saliva, blood, urine, semen and breast milk. A healthy immune system inactivates the virus, and it remains dormant in your body. If your immune system weakens, the virus resurfaces – causing damage to your eyes, digestive tract, lungs or other organs.

Candidiasis. Candidiasis is a common HIV-related infection. It causes inflammation and a thick white coating on the mucous membranes of your mouth, tongue, esophagus or vagina. Children may have especially severe symptoms in the mouth or esophagus, which can make eating painful and difficult.

Cryptococcal meningitis. Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes and fluid surrounding your brain and spinal cord (meninges). Cryptococcal meningitis is a common central nervous system infection associated with HIV, caused by a fungus that is present in soil. It may also be associated with bird or bat droppings.

Toxoplasmosis. This potentially deadly infection is caused by *Toxoplasma gondii*, a parasite spread primarily by cats. Infected cats pass the parasites in their stools, and the parasites may then spread to other animals.

Cryptosporidiosis. This infection is caused by an intestinal parasite that's commonly found in animals. You contract cryptosporidiosis when you ingest contaminated food or water. The parasite grows in your intestines and bile ducts, leading to severe, chronic diarrhea in people with AIDS.

Cancers common to HIV/AIDS

Kaposi's sarcoma. Kaposi's sarcoma is a tumor of the blood vessel walls. Although rare in people not infected with HIV, it's common in HIV-positive people. Kaposi's sarcoma usually appears as pink, red or purple lesions on the skin and mouth. In people with darker skin, the lesions may look dark brown or black. Kaposi's sarcoma can also affect the internal organs, including the digestive tract and lungs.

Lymphomas. This type of cancer originates in your white blood cells. Lymphomas usually begin in your lymph nodes. The most common early sign is painless swelling of the lymph nodes in your neck, armpit or groin.

Other complications

Wasting syndrome. Aggressive treatment regimens have reduced the number of cases of wasting syndrome, but it does still affect many people with AIDS. It is defined as a loss of at least 10 percent of body weight and is often accompanied by diarrhea, chronic weakness and fever.

Neurological complications. Although AIDS doesn't appear to infect the nerve cells, it can still cause neurological symptoms such as confusion, forgetfulness, depression, anxiety and trouble walking. One of the most common neurological complications is AIDS dementia complex, which leads to behavioral changes and diminished mental functioning.