

Mayo Clinic - Symptoms of HIV/AIDS

The symptoms of HIV and AIDS vary, depending on the phase of infection.

Primary infection

The majority people infected by HIV develop a flu-like illness within a month or two after the virus enters the body. This illness, known as primary or acute HIV infection, may last for a few weeks. Possible symptoms include:

- Fever
- Muscle soreness
- Rash
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Mouth or genital ulcers
- Swollen lymph glands, mainly on the neck
- Joint pain
- Night sweats
- Diarrhea

Although the symptoms of primary HIV infection may be mild enough to go unnoticed, the amount of virus in the blood stream (viral load) is particularly high at this time. As a result, HIV infection spreads more efficiently during primary infection than during the next stage of infection.

Clinical latent infection In some people, persistent swelling of lymph nodes occurs during clinical latent HIV. Otherwise, there are no specific signs and symptoms. HIV remains in the body, however, as free virus and in infected white blood cells. Clinical latent infection typically lasts 8 to 10 years. A few people stay in this stage even longer, but others progress to more-severe disease much sooner.

Early symptomatic HIV infection

As the virus continues to multiply and destroy immune cells, you may develop mild infections or chronic symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Cough and shortness of breath

Progression to AIDS

If you receive no treatment for your HIV infection, the disease typically progresses to AIDS in about 10 years. By the time AIDS develops, your immune system has been severely damaged, making you susceptible to opportunistic infections – diseases that wouldn't trouble a person with a healthy immune system. The signs and symptoms of some of these infections may include:

- Soaking night sweats
- Shaking chills or fever higher than 100 F (38 C) for several weeks
- Cough and shortness of breath
- Chronic diarrhea

- Persistent white spots or unusual lesions on your tongue or in your mouth
- Headaches
- Persistent, unexplained fatigue
- Blurred and distorted vision
- Weight loss
- Skin rashes or bumps

When to see a doctor

If you think you may have been infected with HIV or are at risk of contracting the virus, seek medical counseling as soon as possible.