What is HIV?

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a disease that weakens the immune system, making it hard for the body to fight infections.

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV is spread by the exchange of certain bodily fluids, primarily by having unprotected sex or sharing needles with a person living with HIV.

What is an HIV test?

An HIV test determines if your body is producing antibodies and/or antigens to HIV. If HIV antibodies or antigens have been detected, you have been infected with HIV. There are both conventional and rapid HIV tests which use blood, plasma, or oral fluids to test for the antibodies and/or antigens. Blood is used for testing at Cal Poly and is checked multiple times before finalizing a positive result.

What if I test HIV positive?

If you are HIV positive, you will discuss this with your Cal Poly medical care provider and will be referred for specialty care. Many HIV treatment options exist for people who are HIV positive.

What if I test HIV negative?

Protect yourself as described below. If you have unprotected sex or share needles for any reason, talk with your health care provider about how often you should test.

You can protect yourself and others from HIV by:

- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is highly effective in preventing HIV when a pill is taken daily as prescribed. For more information, go to [PrEP HIV Basics from the CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/keytopics/prevention/prp/index.html).
- Using a latex/polyurethane condom (male or female) when you have sex (Use only water-based lubricants. Oil-based lubricants will make condoms less effective).
- Not sharing needles for injecting drugs, steroids, vitamins, tattooing, or piercing. People who inject drugs can find [Syringe Services Programs](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/syringe_services.htm) through the California Department of Health.

Other resources for help:

Call the National AIDS Hotline at 800-232-4636 (CDC-INFO) for HIV referral and consultation resources in your area or visit [HIV Consultation and Referral Service of the CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/service/referral/index.html).

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