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What is HIV?

HIV or the human immunodeficiency virus can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), a condition in humans in which the immune system begins to fail, causing life-threatening opportunistic infections.

The four major routes of transmission are unprotected sexual intercourse, contaminated needles, breast milk and transmission from an infected mother to her baby at birth. Screening of blood products for HIV has largely eliminated transmission through blood transfusions or infected blood products in the developed world.

There is currently no vaccine or cure for HIV or AIDS. The only known method of prevention is avoiding exposure to the virus. However, a course of anti-retroviral treatment administered immediately after exposure, referred to as post-exposure prophylaxis, is believed to reduce the risk of infection.