



AIDS/HIV Infection

What is AIDS?

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is caused by the virus HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). HIV attacks and kills the cells in our bodies that keep us from getting diseases. This makes people with HIV get illnesses that healthy people do not get. When a person with HIV gets very sick from pneumonia, some kinds of cancer, and other life-threatening diseases, they are said to have AIDS, which is fatal.

Facts about AIDS

- AIDS is currently the fourth leading cause of death among U.S. women 25-44 years of age.
- In 1997, women accounted for almost 20% of all diagnosed AIDS cases in the U.S. and more than 50% worldwide.
- Between 1996 and 1998, AIDS was responsible for a reported 512 deaths in the state of Georgia alone. Fifty-eight of these deaths were among white women, while 454 were among black women.
- AIDS is not just a disease of urban women in Georgia. Nearly one out of every two women with AIDS in the state lives in a rural area.
- Although African American and Hispanic women make up 21% of all U.S. women, they constituted 77% of reported AIDS cases in 1994.
- The increase in HIV/AIDS cases among women of childbearing age has resulted in an increase in cases among infants and children, most of whom were infected during pregnancy, delivery, or breast feeding.

Signs of HIV

- Many yeast infections
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- Abnormal pap smears (showing unhealthy changes in cervical cells)
- Genital warts and ulcers
- Genital herpes, swollen lymph glands in the neck, underarm, or genital area
- Many fevers including "night sweats"
- Losing weight for no reason
- Loss of appetite
- Constant fatigue
- Diarrhea
- White spots in the mouth

Some women with HIV/AIDS have no signs of the disease. Other women do not show any signs of HIV/AIDS until many years after they were infected.



How do I avoid getting AIDS?

- Do not have sex.
- If you have sex:
 - Use a condom (both oral and anal sex)
 - Do not have multiple sex partners
 - Ask your sex partner if he or she has HIV/AIDS or other STDs, has had sex with someone who had HIV/AIDS or other STDs, or has sores, rashes, or discharge in the genital area.
- Do not share needles if you use drugs.
- Do not share razors or anything that might touch blood, semen or vaginal fluids of an infected person.

Sources:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of Women's Health](#)
- [Project Inform Website](#)
- [CDC Wonder/PC Data File](#), Compressed Mortality. Death Count 15 to unknown age.
- Georgia Department of Human Resources. Division of Public Health. Family Health Branch. "1999 Report on the Status of Women's Health in GA," 1999.