

# Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS): Epidemiology Transmission Prevention and Treatment

R Kumar\*

Department of Public Health, Global  
Health Institute, Hyderabad, India**\*Corresponding author:**

R Kumar

✉ rkumar.publichealth@gmail.com

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University, Abha, Saudi Arabia**Citation:** Kumar R (2024) Acquired Immune  
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## Abstract

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) remains one of the most significant global public health challenges since its discovery in the early 1980s. It is caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which attacks the immune system and weakens the body's ability to fight infections and diseases. Despite major advances in treatment and prevention strategies, millions of people worldwide continue to live with HIV/AIDS. This research article explores the epidemiology, transmission routes, clinical manifestations, prevention strategies, and treatment approaches related to AIDS. The paper also highlights global efforts to control the disease and discusses ongoing challenges such as stigma, limited access to healthcare, and emerging drug resistance. Understanding the scientific and social aspects of HIV/AIDS is essential for designing effective public health interventions and achieving global targets aimed at ending the epidemic.

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## Introduction

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a life-threatening condition caused by infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). HIV attacks the CD4 cells (T-helper cells) of the immune system; leading to progressive immune damage and increased vulnerability to opportunistic infections and cancers. AIDS represents the most advanced stage of HIV infection.

Since the first recognized cases in 1981; HIV/AIDS has become a global pandemic affecting millions of individuals across different regions and socioeconomic groups. According to the World Health Organization; approximately 39 million people were living with HIV globally in recent years [1].

Although significant progress has been made in diagnosis; prevention; and treatment; HIV/AIDS continues to pose major public health and social challenges. The disease is associated not only with medical complications but also with stigma; discrimination; and economic burden.

This article examines the epidemiology; transmission; prevention; and treatment of AIDS while emphasizing the importance of public awareness and early intervention.

## Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS remains a global health concern; particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for the

largest proportion of HIV infections worldwide. However; Asia and the Pacific region also report significant numbers of people living with HIV.

Epidemiological data suggest that young adults; particularly those aged 15–49 years; are the most affected population group [2]. Factors contributing to the spread of HIV include unsafe sexual practices; lack of education; poverty; limited healthcare access; and social stigma.

In India; the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) has implemented several programs aimed at reducing transmission and improving treatment access [3]. These initiatives have led to a Junline in new HIV infections over the past Junade. Nevertheless; certain high-risk groups such as sex workers; intravenous drug users; and men who have sex with men remain particularly vulnerable. Understanding epidemiological trends is crucial for designing targeted prevention and intervention strategies [4].

## Transmission of HIV

HIV is primarily transmitted through the exchange of certain body fluids from an infected individual. These fluids include blood; semen; vaginal fluids; rectal fluids; and breast milk. Unprotected sexual contact with an infected partner is the most common route of HIV transmission. Both heterosexual and homosexual intercourse can transmit the virus. HIV can spread through contaminated blood transfusions; sharing of infected needles;

or exposure to infected blood during medical procedures. HIV can be transmitted from an infected mother to her child during pregnancy; childbirth; or breastfeeding. Healthcare workers may face risk through accidental needle-stick injuries or contact with infected blood. Importantly; HIV cannot be transmitted through casual contact such as hugging; shaking hands; sharing food; or using the same toilet facilities [5].

### Clinical Manifestations

HIV infection progresses through several stages. This stage occurs shortly after infection and may present with flu-like symptoms such as fever; sore throat; rash; and swollen lymph nodes. During this stage; the virus continues to replicate at low levels while the individual may remain asymptomatic for many years. AIDS develops when the immune system becomes severely damaged. Individuals may develop opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis; pneumonia; and certain cancers.

### Prevention Strategies

Preventing HIV infection is a major goal of global public health programs. Effective prevention strategies include behavioral; biomedical; and structural interventions. Using condoms consistently and correctly significantly reduces the risk of HIV

transmission. Early diagnosis through routine testing allows individuals to receive timely treatment and prevent further transmission. Providing sterile needles for intravenous drug users reduces the risk of infection. Antiretroviral treatment during pregnancy can significantly lower the risk of transmitting HIV to infants. PrEP involves the use of antiretroviral medication by HIV-negative individuals at high risk of infection. Public education campaigns and awareness programs also play a crucial role in reducing stigma and promoting preventive behaviors.

### Conclusion

AIDS remains a major global health issue despite decades of scientific research and medical advancements. HIV infection continues to affect millions of people worldwide; particularly in vulnerable populations. Prevention strategies such as safe sexual practices; routine testing; and harm-reduction programs play a vital role in reducing transmission. At the same time; antiretroviral therapy has transformed HIV from a fatal disease into a manageable chronic condition. Continued research; improved healthcare access; and sustained public awareness efforts are essential for controlling the epidemic. Global cooperation and commitment will be critical in achieving the long-term goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat.

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