



HIV Disease/AIDS

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a retrovirus that attacks the body's immune system. It is commonly passed through sexual relations with an infected person, exposure to contaminated blood, or from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding. Following an acute infection, people who are untreated will progress from having no symptoms to having advanced HIV disease, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). AIDS is a life-threatening condition because it interferes with the immune system.

Signs and Symptoms

Following acute infection with HIV, you might develop flu-like symptoms (fever, headache, sore throat, swollen glands, rash) for a period of days or weeks—or you may have no symptoms at all. If untreated, however, the disease will progress, and you will begin to have symptoms, such as:

- Swollen lymph nodes
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Cough or shortness of breath

If untreated, AIDS usually develops within 10 years. Advanced disease makes you more prone to opportunistic infections. Symptoms may include:

- Night sweats
- Chills
- Cough
- Chronic diarrhea
- White spots or lesions on the tongue or in the mouth
- Skin rashes
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Weight loss
- Cognitive changes, such as confusion or forgetfulness
- Blurred and distorted vision

How a Physical Therapist Can Help

Physical therapists do not treat the disease directly, that is done by infectious disease specialists. As a movement expert, a physical therapist's goal in treating someone with HIV/AIDS is to:

- Improve your ability to do daily activities
- Improve your heart health
- Improve your balance
- Reduce your pain