

AIDS

AIDS stands for acquired Immune deficiency disorder. It is a disease that is very dangerous and it causes your immune system not to work properly so that you can't fight off any illnesses. It was first discovered in the early 1980's and has become an epidemic on certain continents like Africa. It is caused by a virus that is called HIV. This stands for human immunodeficiency virus. According to one website, more than 40 million people are infected with the virus now. And half of the people who have the virus don't find out until they have the symptoms of AIDS. Once the symptoms appear it becomes harder to treat and your life span is shortened.

Scientists don't really know for certain where the disease started or how it started, but they do think it may have begun in Africa, south of the Sahara desert. Since 1981, 25 million people around the world have died from AIDS, and Africa is one of the hardest hit countries with the disease. According to one website, 96% of the people with AIDS live in third world nations and don't have the access to medical care and information on how to prevent HIV and AIDS like we do in the United States.

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS and it can be passed a number of ways. One way is through sharing intravenous needles. Drug users often share needles, and if they do this they are sharing blood and passing the virus if one person who used the needle has it. People should never ever share needles. They also say that you should not share razors or any other things that could be contaminated with blood or bodily fluids. Another way is through sex. Sexual contact passes bodily fluids between two people and if one of them has the virus they can pass it. People should never have unprotected sex, and even with a condom, it can sometimes be passed. It can be passed from a mother to her newborn baby through birth or breastfeeding. Before they knew as much about HIV, it used to be passed through blood transfusions. Today, they screen blood very carefully, so this doesn't happen anymore.

Once a person is infected with the HIV virus, he may not know it at all. It doesn't have any symptoms, though someone might feel like they have flu or a cold shortly after they are infected. A person can live with HIV without getting the symptoms of AIDS for up to ten years. So during that time, they can be passing the disease to many people. Inside the body though, the HIV virus is living.

The virus attacks the immune system and the T cells of your body. Once it has destroyed enough of the T cells, you can't fight infections anymore, and you start getting the diseases of AIDS. This is when you are sick with diseases like Kaposi 's sarcoma, a kind of skin cancer, Pneumonia, diarrhea and fevers, lymphoma, funguses in the esophagus and other parts of the body and many more illnesses.

Today, there are treatments to help prolong the life of a person with HIV or AIDS, but there is no cure. If a person finds out he is HIV positive, the doctors will start him on a series of medicines called antiretroviral drugs that can help prevent the HIV virus from becoming AIDS for a long time. For some people, this has been as long as 20 years before they started to get sick with AIDS illnesses. Once a person has the illnesses of AIDS, the average amount of time they will live is 9 months. Early diagnosis and treatment are the key. Early diagnosis also prevents a person from spreading it if they know they have it. Unfortunately, in third world countries, and Africa, people just don't have the money for these expensive drugs, and they are more likely to die. Today scientists are trying to create a vaccine to prevent HIV, and they are also

creating medicines that are helping people with HIV to live longer and prevent diseases that kill them.