HIV can enter the body through blood, semen, vaginal fluid or breast milk. It is most often spread through sex or sharing needles with a person who is living with HIV and is not virally suppressed.

HIV is not spread through touching, kissing, or sharing household items (toilets, cups, silverware, etc.).

HIV is preventable and treatable

People who are HIV-negative can:

- Get tested for HIV regularly
- Use condoms during sex
- Use clean needles and other equipment when injecting drugs
- Use PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis): a medicine that reduces the chance of getting HIV after an exposure
- Use PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis): a medicine taken once daily to help prevent HIV before exposure

People who are HIV-positive can live long and healthy lives if they take HIV medicine.

People who take their medicine consistently can achieve an undetectable viral load. Having an undetectable viral load means that HIV is untransmittable (or cannot be passed) to others through sex.

If you have questions about HIV or would like to find out more about HIV prevention and treatment services near you, please contact the Illinois HIV/STD Hotline (Call: 1-800-243-2437; Text: 1-872-243-1004). Calls and texts are confidential and free of charge.