

What is HIV? HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It destroys cells in the immune system, which normally protect the body from infections and diseases. After being infected with HIV, it can take months before illness appears. Some people develop persistent fever, headaches, swollen lymph glands, skin rashes, sore muscles and joints, stomach upsets, and other symptoms. Whether there are indications of infection or not, the virus grows and can be spread to others. So, it is important to be tested for HIV.

What is AIDS? HIV can eventually cause AIDS, which stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. This means it is an infection coming from outside the body (*acquired from HIV*) that attacks the immune system causing the body's defenses to become weakened (*deficient*). AIDS results in a group of health problems – a syndrome. Because the HIV virus kills off so many immune cells, the body's defenses weaken, and patients with AIDS can get life-threatening illnesses from infections that people with healthy immune systems fight off easily.

Living with HIV/AIDS during treatment for Opioid Use Disorder. Although the virus cannot be cured, there are several anti-HIV medications to fight its spread and damage to the immune system. The medications stop the HIV virus from reproducing itself, and this allows the immune cells to grow back to normal numbers. Combinations of these medicines often are used; however, there currently is no way to rid the body entirely of all virus. Another important goal of drug therapy is to prevent harm from other viruses, bacteria, and fungi that take advantage of

the patient's weakened immune system; these are called "opportunistic infections." Therefore, additional medicines, such as antibiotics, may be prescribed. Healthy living helps strengthen the immune system so it can battle HIV. A good diet, exercise, and adequate rest are important.

Can life continue normally? HIV/AIDS is different in each patient; some become ill rather quickly after infection with HIV, while others live fairly normal lives for years. Because HIV passes from one person to another by the exchange of body fluids – especially semen, vaginal fluids, or blood – unprotected sex and needle sharing must be avoided. There are different varieties of HIV so even in a patient already infected, repeated exposure to the virus can make the disease much worse. And, being treated with anti-HIV medications does not prevent spread of the virus. However, there is no need to avoid normal daily contact with other people. If they are physically able, patients with HIV/AIDS can work and remain socially active.

Is it safe given all the medications I am taking?

There is no scientific evidence that ongoing medication-assisted recoverySM for opioid use disorder is harmful to patients with HIV or AIDS. Nor do any of the three FDA-approved MAR medications weaken the immune system or make the illness worse. However, there

is a potential for drug interactions between MAR medications and some medications used to treat HIV/AIDS, causing the MAR medications to become less effective.

Or, drug levels may become too high in some cases, producing undesirable side effects. Adjusting dosages of the medications or choosing alternative HIV/AIDS medicines can often help.



Many patients in medication-assisted recoverySM (MAR) are infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. At one time, little was known about this infection and there were few medications to treat it. That has changed. Today, HIV/AIDS can be effectively treated during MAR to help achieve better, more productive, and longer lives.

This is real recovery.SM | Visit us at [BHGrecovery.com](https://www.BHGrecovery.com) or for an appointment call **844.535.7291**

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