WHAT IS HIV?
HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). HIV damages the immune system, the part of the body that fights infection. Over time, the immune system becomes so weak that diseases and infections begin to attack the body. As these conditions worsen, a person is diagnosed with AIDS.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET HIV?
HIV is transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breastmilk. The most common way HIV is transmitted is through sexual contact. Anal, vaginal and oral sex can all transmit HIV. You can also get HIV if you share needles, syringes and other equipment for drugs, tattooing or body piercing.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HIV?
Symptoms of an early HIV infection are like the flu. A person might have fever, chills, rash, night sweats, muscle aches, sore throat, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes or mouth ulcers. Many people who get HIV do not have any symptoms. People may not have symptoms until HIV has caused AIDS. The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get a test.
SHOULD YOU GET A TEST FOR HIV?
You should get tested if you have had sex or shared needles with someone who has HIV. You should also get tested if you have had sex or shared needles with someone whose HIV status is not known. About 1 in 8 people who have HIV do not know it. HIV tests are so common now that doctors recommend everyone get tested at least once in his or her life. Get tested more often if you are at risk for HIV.

IS THERE A CURE FOR HIV?
There is no cure for HIV, but medicine can help you manage HIV. If you have trouble paying for HIV medicine, contact the Texas HIV Medication Program at 1-800-255-1090. You can also help your immune system by quitting smoking, eating healthy foods, avoiding stress and getting regular exercise.

WHAT ABOUT HIV AND PREGNANCY?
A pregnant woman can give HIV to her unborn child. If a pregnant woman with HIV takes medicine, she can reduce the chance of giving HIV to her baby to almost none. This is so important that a doctor will test a woman for HIV throughout her pregnancy.

HIV AND STDs
Get tested for HIV if you have another STD. Having an STD increases your chances of getting HIV.

PREVENTING HIV
The only sure way to avoid HIV and other STDs is to not have sex or shoot drugs. If you have sex, you can use latex condoms to reduce your risk. When used the right way, condoms can stop the spread of HIV by preventing contact with semen, vaginal fluids and blood. It is a good idea to use condoms unless tests show you and your partner do not have HIV or other STDs.

You can also reduce your risk for HIV and other STDs by limiting the number of sex partners you have, choosing sexual activities that carry less risk for infection, and talking with your partners openly and honestly about HIV and STDs.

If you use drugs, do not share needles, syringes, or items you use to do drugs.

WHAT ARE PREP AND PEP?
If you are at increased risk of getting HIV, talk to your doctor about PreEP. PreEP stands for Pre-exposure Prophylaxis. It involves taking anti-HIV medicine once a day to prevent HIV if you are exposed to it. Taking PreEP can greatly lower your risk of becoming HIV-positive.

PEP stands for Post-Exposure Prophylaxis. It involves taking anti-HIV medicine within 72 hours of being exposed to HIV to prevent infection. If you think you’ve recently been exposed to HIV through sex or sharing needles and works to do drugs, or if you’ve been sexually assaulted, talk to your health care provider or an emergency room doctor about PEP right away.

Where can I learn more?
Visit knowmystatus.org or call 2-1-1 to find a clinic in your area to get tested.

Many public health clinics provide STD testing and treatment for little or no cost. Your name and health records are kept private.

DSHS HIV/STD Program
www.dshs.texas.gov/hivstd