• Communicate—talk to your partners about safe sex and STI testing BEFORE you have sex
• Get tested—ask your provider about STI testing. Get tested with your partner(s) BEFORE you have sex
• Limit the number of partners—The more partners someone has, the higher the risk of STI
• Avoid drugs and alcohol—sometimes its hard to have safe sex if drugs and alcohol are in the mix. If you feel like drugs or alcohol are becoming a problem, ask your provider or case manager for help

Nutrition
Nutrition is important for everyone because food provides the body nutrients it needs to stay healthy and grow. There are 6 types of nutrients and we need each of them to have a healthy diet:

- Protein
- Carbohydrates
- Fat
- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Water

Good nutrition means eating the right types of foods in the right portions for you to receive these nutrients. A Registered Dietitian can help you develop the right meal plan for your body.

Oral Health
The mouth is sometimes the first part of the body to be affected by HIV. People with HIV are at high risk for oral health problems and almost all adults with HIV will have a problem with their oral health at some point. Common HIV-related oral health problems are:

- Dry mouth
- Thrush
- Oral hairy leukoplakia
- Mouth ulcers including canker sores
- Cold sores (Herpes simplex virus)

Dental problems can be painful and cause trouble chewing or swallowing. Sometimes this makes a person skip their medication or avoid eating.

The best prevention is:
- Visit your dentist regularly. If you don’t have a dentist, ask your provider for a referral
- Brush and floss your teeth twice daily
- Tell your provider if you have dry mouth

Fast Track Cities
Fast Track Cities is a program whose goal is to end the HIV epidemic by 2030. San Antonio was the first city in Texas to sign on to Fast Track Cities. The goals of the Fast Track Cities Campaign are “90/90/90/0”

- 90% of people are aware of HIV status
- 90% of people with HIV are in treatment/medical care
- 90% of people in treatment virally suppressed (undetectable viral load)
- 0% Stigma

CentroMed is proud to be one of the Fast Track Cities Partners.

References:
1.) HIV Disease Process [WEBPAGE]
2.) Medication Adherence/Tips chart [WEBPAGE]
3.) ART Medication [WEBPAGE]
4.) Risk Reduction/Stages [WEBPAGE]
5.) STDs [WEBPAGE]
6.) Safe Sex [WEBPAGE]
7.) Nutrition [WEBPAGE]
8.) Oral Health [WEBPAGE]
**HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus**

HIV is a virus. HIV is spread through contact with the blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk.

In the United States, HIV is mainly spread through sex without condoms or sharing drug injection equipment with a person who has HIV.

**3 stages of HIV infection/HIV Disease**

**Process:**

**Acute HIV Infection:** The first stage with flu-like symptoms. This happens 2-4 weeks after someone is exposed.

**Chronic HIV Infection:** HIV is multiplying in the body. Most of the time people in this stage do not feel sick but they can still spread HIV to others. Without treatment, chronic HIV can become AIDS.

**AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome):**

The last stage of HIV infection. The immune system can’t fight infections. Some infections only happen in people with weak immune systems. These are called **Opportunistic Infections**. People are diagnosed with AIDS if they have a CD4 count less than 200 cells/mm³ or if they have certain opportunistic infections. HIV medicines can help people at this stage, but without treatment, people with AIDS usually only live 3 to 5 years.

**Key Terms**

**CD4 (T-cells):** Cells that fight infection. This number should be high. A normal CD4 is 350-1500.

**Viral Load:** How much virus is in the blood. This should be low. The goal is undetectable.

**About ART & Goals**

Antiretroviral Therapy or ART is the type of medicine that treats HIV. ART cannot cure HIV, but it can help people with HIV stay healthy and live longer. For most people, ART is made up of 3 different medications. Sometimes these medications are all in the same pill. When someone is on ART it is important that they take their medication every day. This is called **Medication Adherence**. Good medication adherence helps bring the virus down to low levels in the body. The **goal** is to have an undetectable viral load. An undetectable viral load helps keep the body healthy and lowers the risk of passing HIV onto partners. Like any medicine, there are some risk and side effects to ART. The provider will talk about these side effects during the appointment.

**Substance Abuse**

Drug and alcohol use can raise the risk of getting HIV or make it harder for someone with HIV to stay healthy. Sometimes people who use drugs and alcohol have risky sex, they miss medical appointments or don’t take their medication everyday.

Examples of substances that can do this are alcohol, crack cocaine, opioids (pain medicines), methamphetamine, inhalants (poppers).

**STIs, Safe Sex, and Lower Risk**

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are passed from one person to another by sexual activity (vaginal, oral, and anal sex) and sometimes just skin-to-skin contact. In the United States, there are about 20 million new infections every year. STIs can be prevented by not having sex (abstinence). For people who have sex, using condoms and a lubricant can lower the risk. Lambskin condoms DO NOT protect against STIs.

Common STIs are: HIV, Syphilis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), Herpes Simplex Virus, Hepatitis B and C.

Here are some **Prevention Strategies** on Safe Sex:

- **Decide your limit**—choose what sexual activities you are comfortable with and what is safe for you
- **Know the tools**—condoms, lube, dental dams, gloves, and finger cots are tools that can be used to prevent STIs
- **Keep tools nearby**—having your tools nearby, makes it easier to practice safe sex and prevention