

# How Does HIV Become AIDS?

You don't actually "get" AIDS. Instead, a person with HIV may develop AIDS.

The word AIDS is used to describe when a person's CD4 cells are very low and his or her immune system can't protect the body from infections. You have AIDS if HIV destroys too many CD4 cells and your CD4 count drops below 200, or if you develop an opportunistic infection (an infection by something that normally does not cause disease unless the body's immune system is damaged and unable to fight off infection).

Taking your medication can prevent you from developing AIDS because it keeps your **CD4 count up** and your **viral load down**.

