In fact, once you get AIDS, even the smallest infection can become lethal, and you also become vulnerable to cancers of various types. Having acquired immunodeficiency syndrome means having a T cell count of less than 200 units per ml of blood, a condition that exposes you to enormous health risks. Without ART, death can occur within a few years of AIDS diagnosis.

But let's see precisely what are the pathologies that are associated with the full-blown disease, which are also defined as "opportunistic". The term indicates that the balance between host organism and host organism has been unbalanced in favor of the second (the HIV virus), which no longer finds limits and barriers to its possibility of multiplying and favoring the appearance of specific and recurrent infections. determined by microorganisms mostly already present in the body such as:

- Chronic Candida infections (mycosis caused by the fungus Candida albicans which can affect the oral or genital mucosa) affecting the oral cavity, esophagus, trachea, bronchi and lungs;
- Non-pulmonary cryptococcosis. It is an infectious disease caused by exposure to guano from birds, especially pigeons, which usually affects the lungs by inhalation. In AIDS patients, on the other hand, infectious foci can appear in other organs such as the skin, bones, liver, spleen;
- Cryptosporidiosis, a rare infection that affects the intestinal tract causing prolonged diarrhea;
- Cytomegalovirus (CMT) infection in adults;
- Herpes simplex of the skin in adults that produces lesions, typically small ulcers, which do not heal;
- Bronchitis, recurrent esophagitis;
- Kaposi's sarcoma, a rare form of cancer that affects the epithelial cells (the lining tissue) of the blood and lymphatic vessels of both the skin and internal organs. It is usually more common in the over 60s, but in the case of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome it can indeed arise in young people;
- Primary cerebral lymphoma, a tumor form that originates in the nervous tissue also in this case in subjects under 60;
- Interstitial lymphoid pneumonia in adults. Rare lung disease characterized by the accumulation of lymphocytes in the alveoli of the lungs;
- Pulmonary lymphoid hyperplasia (or pulmonary nodular lymphatic). Also in this case it is a rare pathology affecting the lungs similar to a slow-growing tumor;
- Disseminated non-tuberculous mycobacterial infections (NTM-LD). Severe bacterial infections of the lungs;
- Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, a germ already present in the body;
- Cytomegalovirus, an infection that can cause damage to the eyes, digestive system or lungs;
- Meningitis;
- Toxoplasmosis, an infection transmitted by animals (especially cats) that can reach the brain and cause seizures;
- Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML), a rare infectious disease of the brain.
• Other common infections associated with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and considered symptoms of the full-blown disease are:

**Tuberculosis;**
Pneumonia, meningitis and encephalitis up to sepsis from bacteria such as Pneumococci, Staphylococcus aureus, Streptococcus and Hemophilus; Disseminated coccidioidomycosis (or San Joaquin fever or Valley fever), lung disease caused by a fungus;

- Encephalopathy;
- Disseminated histoplasmosis, also an infectious disease of the lungs;
- Isosporiasis, a rare parasitic disease that causes prolonged diarrhea;
- Non-Hodgkin B-cell lymphoma;
- Salmonella septicemia (with the exception of Salmonella Typhi or enterica, responsible for typhoid fever).

Both opportunistic infectious diseases, including those that in non-immunosuppressed subjects would be completely asymptomatic, and tumors - as we have seen the most common are lymphomas and Kaposi's sarcoma - in AIDS patients tend to become chronic and therefore remain in the body. without there being the possibility of healing. Fortunately, the anti-retroviral therapeutic protocol - ART - which we will be discussing shortly, allows us not to reach these dramatic consequences. The complications of AIDS, in fact, are lethal.

**HIV / AIDS symptoms: differences between men and women**

So far we have talked about the "generic" symptoms of both HIV infection (and therefore the condition of seropositivity), and full-blown AIDS. Since, however, men and women do not have exactly the same response to the virus, let's try to better specify what happens when the infection is transmitted to a male organism, and when to a female one.

If, therefore, absolutely the symptomatology of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome presents slight differences in the male or female population, and therefore the indications of the previous paragraphs are valid, focusing on women, we discover the specifically female symptoms attributable to HIV / AIDS infection that can show up more frequently:

- Vaginal mycoses (such as Candida albicans vaginal candidiasis);
- Other vaginal infections such as bacterial vaginosis
- Sexually transmitted infections such as gonorrhea, chlamydia and trichomoniasis;
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID);
- Papilloma virus (HPV) infection;
- Infections of the reproductive system with consequent changes in the menstrual cycle and even sterility.
In men, the symptoms of HIV / AIDS infection are non-specific (especially in the early stage), and therefore include all those disorders that we have already listed, starting with flu-like symptoms. We take into account the fact that the HIV syndrome and AIDS were initially identified and studied in men, and that therefore the general symptoms detected (which we have also taken into account in this study) were precisely described on the male population affected by the disease, and this despite the fact that women are more vulnerable to the attack of the virus than men. Today, in fact, we know that the likelihood of a woman contracting HIV infection during unprotected sexual intercourse with an HIV-positive man is double that of a man of becoming ill with the same mode of transmission.

HIV / AIDS infection is therefore not equally dangerous for men and women for social reasons (women, for example, are more exposed to violence and rape which entail an increased risk of contracting the virus), but above all genetic and biological. More recent studies have shown that in women the progression of AIDS is faster than in men, and that even when the viral load is kept under control thanks to antiretroviral therapies, in women the immune activation with the consequent inflammatory reaction generalized is higher than in men.