HIV is a lentivirus, which is a subgroup of retroviruses. It is the virus responsible for causing acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). HIV infects cells of the immune system, particularly CD4 T cells, which are crucial for the body's defense against infections. Over time, as HIV multiplies and destroys these CD4 T cells, the immune system becomes weakened, making the infected individual more susceptible to opportunistic infections and certain cancers.