



PLATINUM HEALTH



Platinum Health Medical Scheme

Living with HIV

What you need to know



What is HIV?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. Your health is our Number 1 Priority. Platinum Health offers unlimited HIV tests, treatments, counselling and support.

HIV can be transmitted in the following ways



Unprotected sex with an infected partner.



Mother-to-child (during labour).



Exposure of broken skin or wound to infected blood or body fluids.



Injection with contaminated objects.



You cannot get HIV from:



Sneezing



Hugging and touching



Kissing on the lips or with tongues



Touching door knobs, toilet seats or handles



Sharing towels, clothing, cutlery and crockery



Coughing



Sharing food

How do I prevent getting HIV?



Have a sexual relationship with only **ONE** partner.



Use a condom every time you have sex.



Do not do drugs.



Take medication (PeP or PreP) to prevent HIV.

Knowing your status gives you peace of mind. Get **tested at any Platinum Health facility.**

Why should I go for an HIV test?

Going for an HIV test may not be easy but it is the only way to know your status. When you know your HIV status, you have a chance to change things in your life and it will help you to make important choices for yourself and others.

The 4 Stages of HIV infection

These stages are the same for men and women but the rate of HIV for each person in each stage can be different.

Clinical Stage 1 = Asymptomatic or Generalised Lymphadenopathy	Clinical Stage 2 = Recurrent Respiratory Infections, Oral Lesions, Skin Lesions	Clinical Stage 3 = Weight loss, Pulmonary TB etc.	Clinical Stage 4 = AIDS defining infections e.g. TB outside the lungs (extrapulmonary)
The body is strong. Often there are swollen glands and a short flu-like illness. This is the most infectious stage.	There is loss of weight, chest and ear infections, mild skin problems and sore throats. You can be in this stage for 10 years.	The body goes through major weight loss, tiredness and fevers. Infections begin like severe diarrhea, TB (lung), thrush, shingles and mouth infections.	The body is exhausted. Now "new" infections attack like cancers, pneumonia, herpes, severe thrush, TB (other parts of body) and meningitis.
White blood cells are healthy and the CD4 count is high.	The immune system is fighting. CD4 cells are now under attack and the count drops.	The immune system is under attack. CD4 cell count is still dropping.	The immune system collapses. The body can't fight new diseases. CD4 cell count is very low.
HIV enters the body in one of 3 ways – unprotected sex is the most common way.	HIV is rapidly growing and changing to confuse the immune system.	HIV is getting stronger – still growing and changing.	The HIV (viral load) is high and is getting stronger.
The body starts to fight the virus. An HIV test will be negative now (window period).	Antibodies now form. The HIV test will be positive now.	The B-cells are confused and can't keep up with the changing HIV. The HIV test will be positive now. Time for ARVs.	The body can't keep up. Antibodies stop fighting. An HIV test for anti-bodies can be negative. Time to start ARVs.

How do I have an HIV test?

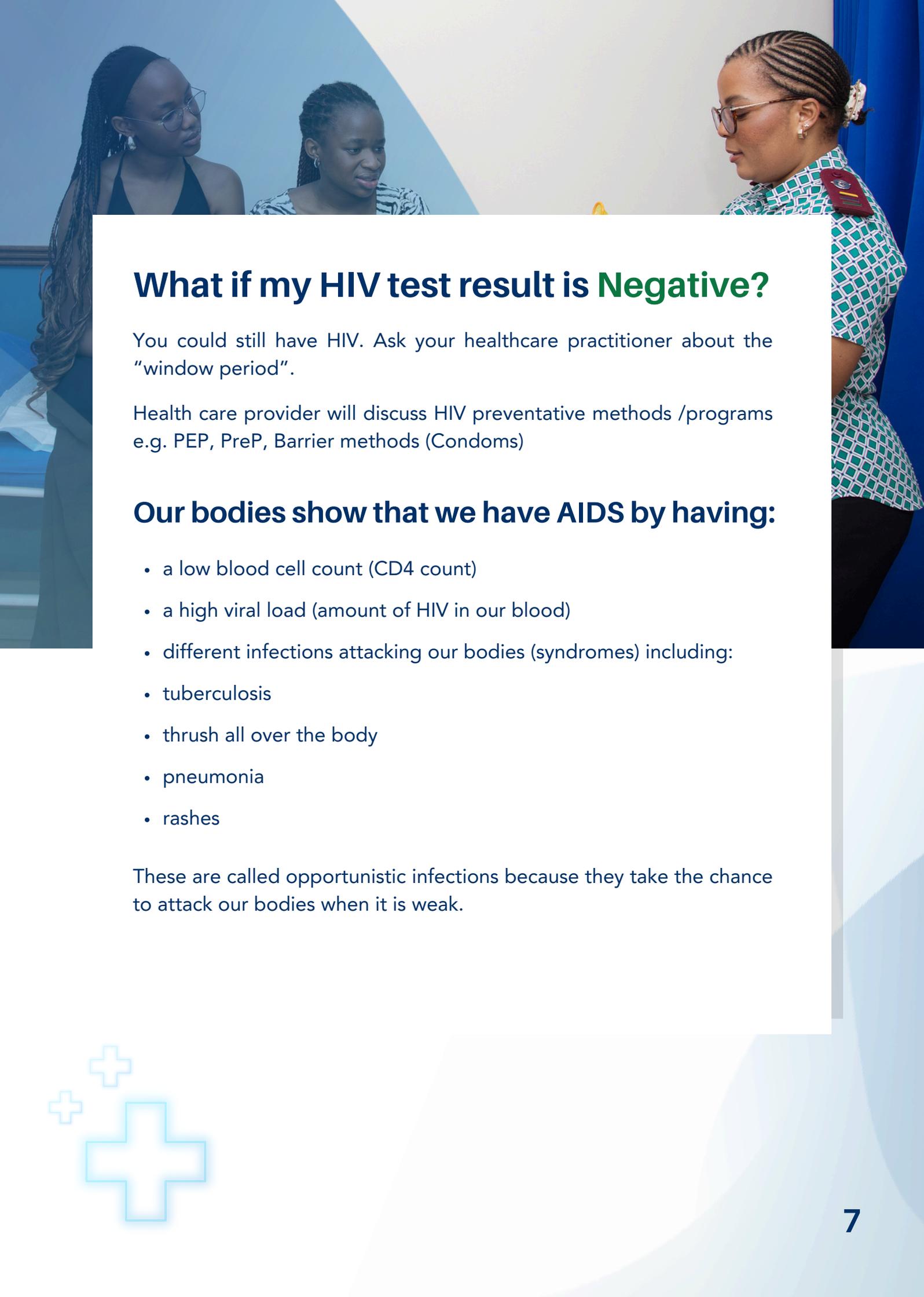
You should go to the nearest Platinum Health Clinic if you are thinking about having an HIV test. The healthcare practitioner will talk to you about the test and explain how the test works. You can decide whether or not to have the test. No one can force you to have an HIV test – it is your choice.

If you decide to test, the healthcare practitioner will take a blood test. This will be checked for HIV antibodies, which are made by the immune system soon after you are infected.

What if my HIV test result is **positive**?

- You are infected.
- It is very important that you see a doctor so that you can start taking ARV (Anti-Retroviral) treatment as soon as possible!
- Once you start treatment, the key to staying well and becoming viral load suppressed is to make sure that you take your medication regularly as prescribed: which usually means every day at the same time.
- Skipping doses or taking them at different times each day will stop it from protecting your immune system.



A photograph of three women in conversation. One woman on the right is wearing a green and white patterned shirt and glasses. Two other women are on the left, one with glasses and a black top, and another with a patterned top. They appear to be in a professional or educational setting.

What if my HIV test result is **Negative**?

You could still have HIV. Ask your healthcare practitioner about the “window period”.

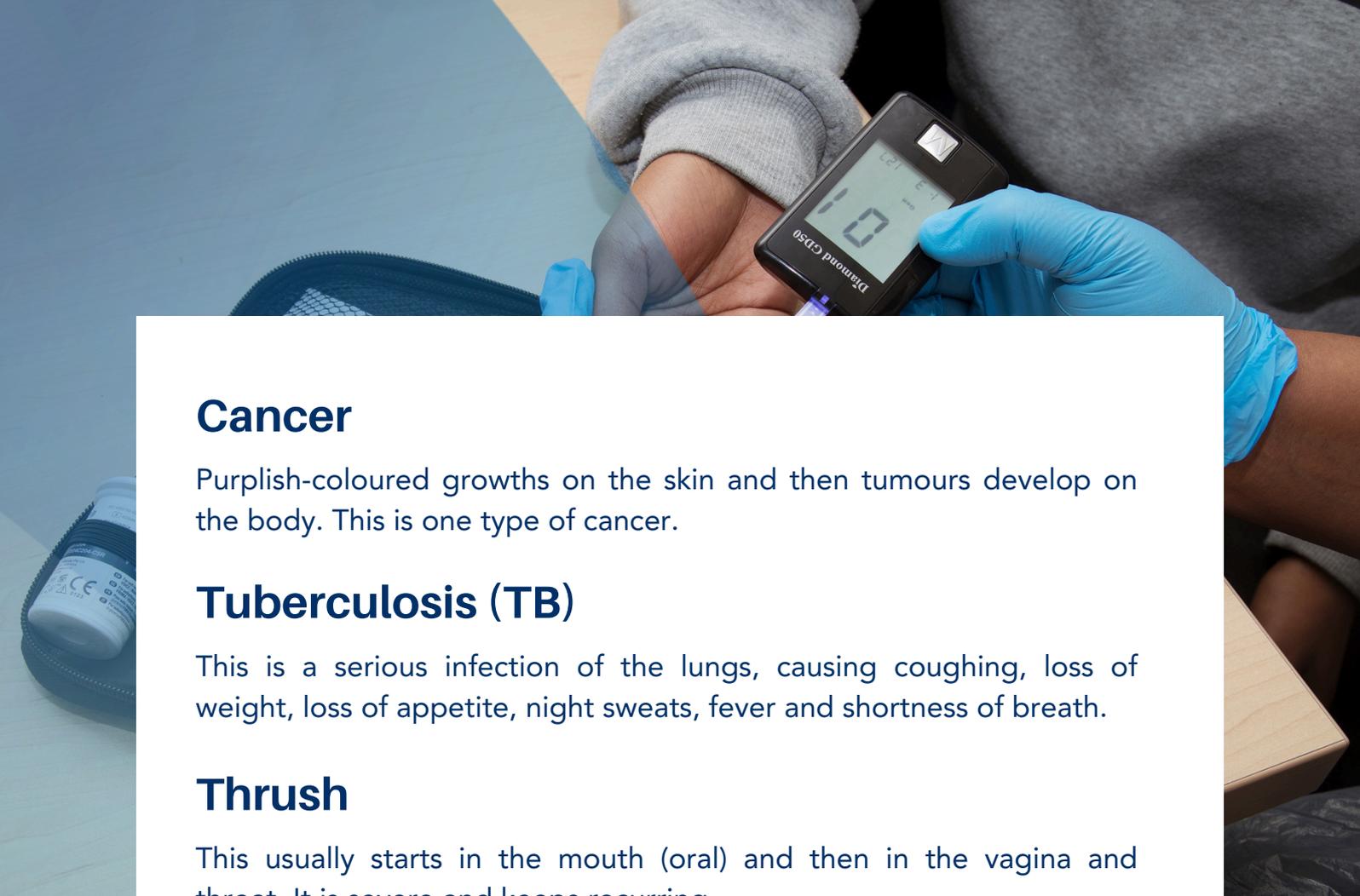
Health care provider will discuss HIV preventative methods /programs e.g. PEP, PreP, Barrier methods (Condoms)

Our bodies show that we have AIDS by having:

- a low blood cell count (CD4 count)
- a high viral load (amount of HIV in our blood)
- different infections attacking our bodies (syndromes) including:
 - tuberculosis
 - thrush all over the body
 - pneumonia
 - rashes

These are called opportunistic infections because they take the chance to attack our bodies when it is weak.





Cancer

Purplish-coloured growths on the skin and then tumours develop on the body. This is one type of cancer.

Tuberculosis (TB)

This is a serious infection of the lungs, causing coughing, loss of weight, loss of appetite, night sweats, fever and shortness of breath.

Thrush

This usually starts in the mouth (oral) and then in the vagina and throat. It is severe and keeps recurring.

Pneumonia (PCP)

A very rare type of pneumonia with continuous sore throats, fever and coughing.



What is HIV medicine?

Your healthcare practitioner has prescribed Antiretroviral (ART) medicine to treat your HIV. It is important to remember to take your ART medicines as prescribed so that you are able to control your illness for the rest of your life.



Why is it important to take your ART's every day?

Missing a dose of your ART medicine or taking it late can:

- Make the ART less effective and the virus can start multiplying again.
- Make the virus resistant to the ART's and your treatment may need to be changed.

For these reasons, it is important to take your ART's exactly the way your healthcare practitioner has advised, unless you are experiencing side effects from the ART's, in which case you need to speak to your healthcare practitioner.

You shouldn't stop taking ART's once you start them. No one can force you to take ART's, but remember, if you decide to take them:

- You will live a longer life.
- You will have a better quality of life.

You will progress to what is called the U=U status where the HIV is undetected and untransmissible, protecting your sexual partner from infection.



Tips to help you remember to take your medicines



Get into the habit of taking your ART's at the same time every day.



Use a weekly pill organizer to make it easier to remember to take your medicine.



Use a cellphone reminder, your watch or any electronic reminder to help you remember to take your ART's every day



Keep a few (2 – 3) tablets as a back – up supply in your handbag, backpack or at work, in case you forget to take your ART's one day.



Never change the number of tablets you take or stop taking ART's without speaking to your healthcare practitioner first.

Treatment of HIV

Nutrition



Fruit and vegetables – these help to fight sickness.



Beans, lentils, meat, fish, milk and eggs – these build the body and give you strength.



Maas or yoghurt – this helps digestion.



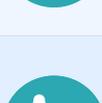
Brown bread, brown rice, mieliepap and samp – these all give energy to help with growth.

Treatment of HIV

Exercise

	Walking
	Cycling
	Slow Running
	Stretching exercises
	Yoga

Healthy Lifestyle

	To be healthy, you need to stop smoking, drinking and taking drugs.
	Drink lots of water
	You can still enjoy sex, but remember to wear a condom. You don't want to pas the virus onto anyone else.

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