

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, treatment, 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:

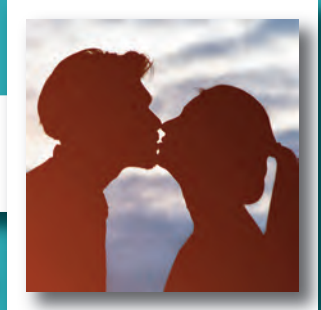
Sneezing



Hugging or touching



Kissing on the lips or with tongues



Touching door knobs, toilet seat or toilet handles



Sharing towels, clothing, cutlery and crockery



Coughing



Sharing food



How do I prevent getting HIV?

Have relationship with only **ONE** sex partner.



Use a condom every time you have sex

Do not do drugs



Peace of mind is priceless

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 = INFECTION	CLINICAL STAGE 2 = ASYMPTOMATIC	CLINICAL STAGE 3 = SYMPTOMATIC	CLINICAL STAGE 4 = AIDS
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. An HIV test will be positive now.	The B-cells are confused and can’t keep up with the changing HIV. An HIV test will be positive now. Time for ARVs.	The body can’t keep up. Antibodies stop fighting. An HIV test for antibodies 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 with HIV.
- You can spread it to your sexual partners if you have unsafe sex.
- You should always use a condom if you have sex.
- It is important to tell sexual partners that you are HIV positive. Discuss this with a health worker.
- You must not donate blood.



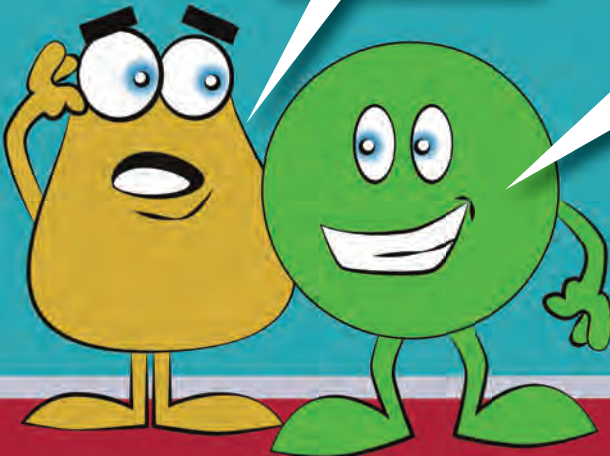
What if my test result is negative?

You could still have HIV. Ask your healthcare practitioner about the “window period”. It is the time from when the virus entered your body until it shows in your blood.



I am so sad. I just heard I am HIV positive and I don't know what to do.

My friend, don't be afraid. Even if you are HIV+ it does not mean you cannot live a long and healthy life. Platinum Health will help you get the right treatment and will support you every step of the way. You just have to make sure you take your HIV medicine every day!

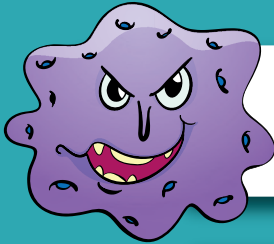




Our bodies show that we have AIDS by having:

- 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.

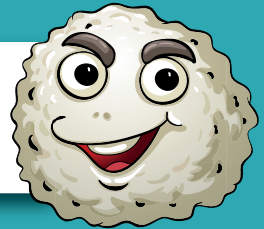


Cancer

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.

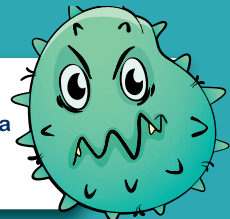


Thrush

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, of you decide to take them:

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



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 organiser to make it easier to remember to take your medicines. Keep the box where you will see it.



Use a cellphone reminder, your watch or another 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 your ART's without speaking to your healthcare practitioner first.



Treatment of HIV

Food



**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**



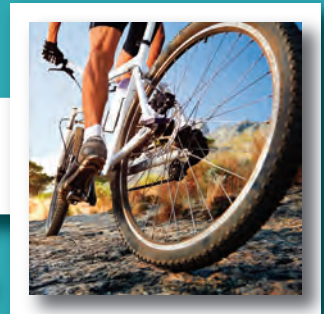
Exercise



It is also important to have exercise.
The following are good ways to exercise:



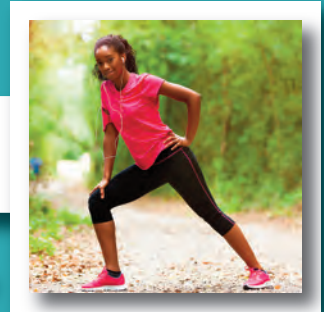
Walking



Cycling



Slow running



Stretching exercises



Yoga



Healthy lifestyle



To be healthy you should stop smoking, drinking and taking drugs.



Drink lots of water



You can still enjoy sex, but remember to use a condom. You don't want to pass the virus on to anyone else.

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