



**Know
your Status**

**SAY
YES ✓
TO THE TEST**

Know your status and be part of the change

South Africa is home to more people living with HIV than any other country.¹

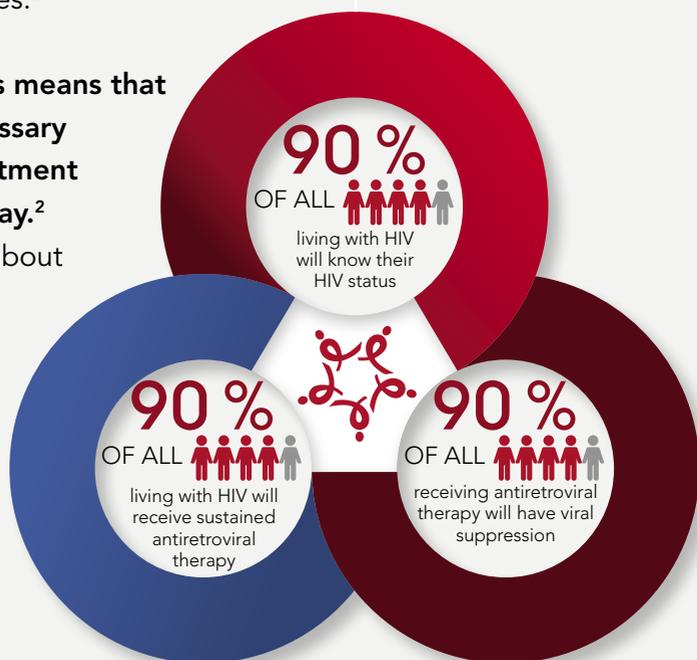
Currently approximately 75 % of people with HIV know their status.²

Although people living with HIV tend to be most infectious in the first few months, many are unaware of their status until later stages.²

Knowing your status means that you can access necessary prevention and treatment services without delay.²

Talk to your partner about HIV testing and get tested before you have sex.³

UNAIDS has set the 90-90-90 ambitious, but achievable target for 2020: ¹



When this target is reached, at least 73 % of all people living with HIV worldwide will be virally suppressed, enabling the world to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.¹

How to know your HIV status

Anyone who is concerned about being infected with HIV can request to be tested.⁴

The current combination screening test tests for two things that suggest HIV infection:⁴

- Antibodies to HIV: these are proteins produced by the immune system to help defend the body against a particular attack, such as that by HIV.
- HIV antigens (p24 antigen): are foreign substances that can trigger an immune response.

The body takes several weeks to produce enough antibodies to be detected by the test, so results of the antibody test are not available for a while (this is also known as the window period).^{2,4}

However, results of the p24 antigen test can be positive as early as 2 weeks after the initial infection. The combination tests can be done quickly by a laboratory.⁴

If people at low risk have a negative test result, the screening test is not repeated unless their risk status changes. If people at the highest risk have a negative test result (especially if they are sexually active, have several sex partners, or do not practice safe sex), testing should be repeated every 6 to 12 months.⁴



HIV RNA tests can confirm positive results of an antibody test or detect evidence of HIV infection when antibody test results are negative. These tests can detect very small amounts of HIV RNA in blood and are very accurate.⁴

What is HIV?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) attacks and destroys the infection-fighting CD4 cells of the immune system. This makes it difficult for the body to fight infections and certain cancers. Without treatment, HIV can gradually destroy the immune system and advance to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).^{2,5} This can take from 2 to 15 years to develop depending on the individual.²

The symptoms of HIV vary depending on the stage of infection. The first few weeks after initial infection, individuals may experience no symptoms or an influenza-like illness including fever, headache, rash, or sore throat. As the infection progressively weakens the immune system, an individual can develop other signs and symptoms, such as swollen lymph nodes, weight loss, fever, diarrhoea and cough.²





Tuberculosis (TB) is the most common presenting illness and cause of death among people with HIV. Early detection and prompt TB treatment and antiretroviral therapy (ART) can prevent these deaths.²

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV can be spread through contact with certain body fluids from a person with HIV, such as:^{2, 5}



Blood



Breast milk



Semen and vaginal secretions

HIV can also be transmitted from a woman with HIV to her child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.⁵



You cannot become infected through ordinary day-to-day contact such as:²



Kissing



Hugging



Shaking hands



Sharing personal objects, food or water

Can HIV be cured?

There is no cure for HIV infection. However, effective antiretroviral (ARV) drugs can control the virus by suppressing viral replication within a person's body and allowing an individual's immune system to strengthen and regain the capacity to fight off infections. This helps people with HIV to enjoy healthy, long and productive lives.²

HIV medicines are also used for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.³

PrEP is an HIV prevention option for people who don't have HIV but who are at high risk of becoming infected with HIV. PrEP involves taking a specific HIV medicine every day.³

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is the use of HIV medicines to reduce the risk of HIV infection soon after a possible exposure to HIV. To be effective, PEP must be started within 3 days after the possible exposure to HIV. PEP involves taking HIV medicines each day for 28 days.³

Women with HIV take HIV medicines during pregnancy and childbirth to reduce the risk of passing HIV to their babies. Their newborn babies also receive HIV medicine for 4 to 6 weeks after birth. This reduces the risk of infection from any HIV that may have entered a baby's body during childbirth.³

How can I reduce my risk of getting HIV?

Anyone can get HIV, but you can take steps to protect yourself from HIV infection.^{3, 5}



Talk to your partner about HIV testing and get tested before you have sex.³

Having an STD can increase your risk of becoming infected with HIV or spreading it to others. You and your partner should get tested and treated for STDs.³



Use a condom correctly every time you have sex. HIV is mainly spread by having anal or vaginal sex without a condom or without taking medicines to prevent or treat HIV.³



Limit your number of sexual partners. If you have more than one sexual partner, get tested for HIV regularly.³



Talk to your healthcare provider about pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).³



Don't inject drugs. But if you do, use only sterile drug injection equipment and water and never share your equipment with others.³

For more information, refer to your Healthcare Professional.

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