



**1 What is HIV? HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus.**

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. This virus attacks the body's immune system and makes it difficult to fight off diseases and infections. The immune system is considered deficient when it can no longer fulfill its role of fighting infection and disease. Infections associated with severe immunodeficiency are known as "opportunistic infections", because they take advantage of a weakened immune system. Immune function is typically measured by CD4 cell count.

**2 What is AIDS? AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.**

This is the most advanced stage of HIV infection. It occurs when the body's immune system is overwhelmed by the HIV virus and is characterized the occurrence some specific opportunistic infections or HIV-related cancers.

Having HIV infection does not mean one has AIDS. Having AIDS is prevented by starting treatment.

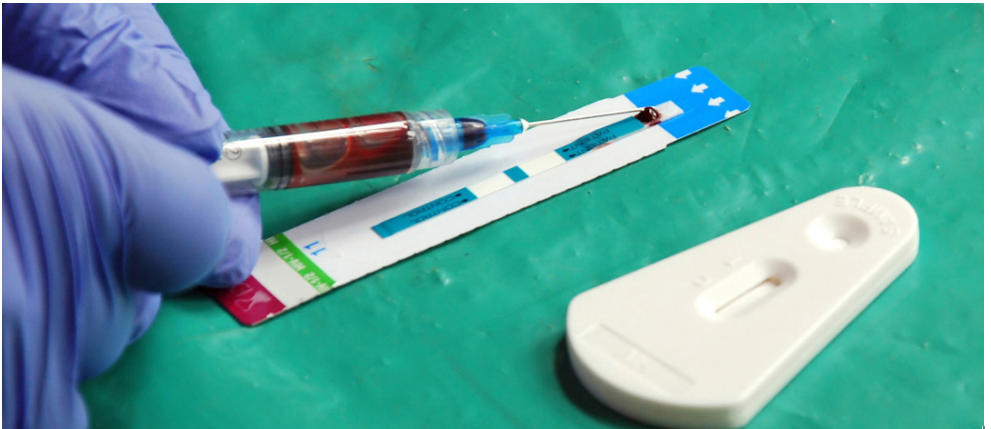
**3 How can I tell if I have HIV?**

Many people who have HIV don't even know it because they don't show any symptoms for years. Even though you don't show any symptoms, you can still pass on the virus to someone else. Testing for HIV is the only way to know whether you have been infected.

There is a window period, where it takes 3 months for HIV antibodies to show up on an HIV test. The HIV antibody testing may be negative even though a person is infected. Healthcare workers will recommend retesting after three month window period to ensure the test is accurate.

**4 How can I tell if someone else has HIV? There is no way to know for sure if someone else has HIV unless they have an HIV test.**

Many people with HIV look perfectly healthy. Other people who have HIV may have symptoms that are identical to other common illnesses. You cannot tell by looking whether someone is HIV positive or not.



## 5 What is the benefit of an HIV test?

- If you learn that you are HIV positive, you can take steps before symptoms appear to access treatment, care and support, thereby potentially prolonging your life and preventing health complications for many years.
- If you know that you are infected, you can take precautions to prevent the spread of HIV to others.
- If you know you are uninfected, you avoid risk sexual behavior that put you at risk of being infected

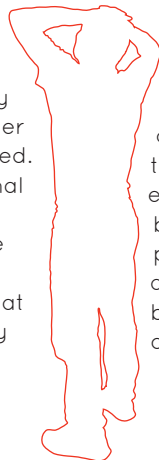


## 6 Where can I get a HIV test?

You can get a HIV test in all government health facilities, mission hospitals, and nursing homes and stand alone HIV testing sites. Adolescents who are 15 years and above can now give consent and get a HIV test at the health facilities

## 7 I'm afraid to take HIV test what can I do?

It's quick and easy: Getting an HIV test is quick, easy and almost always free. It's also the only way to know for sure whether or not you have been infected. It's better to know: It's normal to feel worried about HIV. But why let yourself fear the unknown? Testing early for HIV can help put your mind at ease and reduce the anxiety



of not knowing. Whether your result is negative, or positive, it's always better to know so that you can move on with your life, or start treatment if necessary. And remember, your result may not be what you expect.

## 8 If I test HIV positive what should I do?

If you test positive for HIV, the sooner you take steps to protect your health, the better. Early medical treatment and a healthy lifestyle can help you stay well. Prompt medical care delay onset of AIDS and delay some life threatening conditions. It is very important to take your HIV medicines exactly as directed. We have better treatments today, and people are living longer and with a better quality of life than ever before. There is much you can do to stay healthy and protect

others. Learn all you can about maintaining good health.

- Seek Counseling and psychological support
- Access to good nutrition, safe water and basic hygiene
- If you're sexually active, you need to tell your sexual partner(s) about the HIV infection so that they can be tested.
- Always practice safe sexual procedures and activities
- Always using condom for vaginal, oral or anal sex.

**9 My partner has refused to go for HIV test what can I do since I cannot use protection with him/her?** Talk to your partner about the importance of knowing their HIV status together and always protect him/herself from not getting infected since he/she does not know the other person status. Find out reason for not wanting the test and address as a couple. It might be useful to discuss this with your counselor as well.

**10 What are the signs and symptoms of HIV?** The symptoms of HIV vary depending on the stage of infection. Some people may experience a flu-like illness within 2-4 weeks after HIV infection. But some people may not feel sick during this stage. Flu-like symptoms can include:

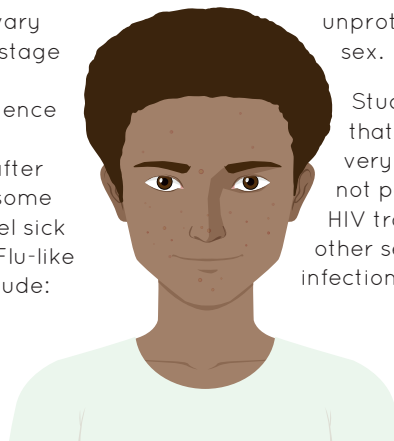
Fever, headache, Chills, Rash, Night sweats, Muscle aches, Sore throat, Fatigue.

As the infection progressively weakens the immune system, an individual can develop other signs and symptoms, such as swollen lymph nodes, weight loss, fever, mouth ulcers, diarrhea and cough. Without treatment, they could also develop severe illnesses such as tuberculosis, cryptococcal meningitis, and cancers such as lymphomas and Kaposi's sarcoma, among others.

**11 Which body fluids transmit HIV?** HIV can be transmitted through various body fluids from infected individuals, such as blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk. However, HIV cannot be transmitted through urine, saliva or sweat.

**12 Can I get HIV from oral sex?** Yes, it is possible for either partner to become infected with HIV through performing or receiving oral sex. While no one knows exactly what the degree of risk is less than that of unprotected anal or vaginal sex.

Studies have shown that latex condoms are very effective, though not perfect, in preventing HIV transmission and other sexually transmitted infections when used



correctly and consistently. Condoms for either male or female can be used. If your partner is female, use a latex barrier (such as a cut-open condom that makes a square) between your mouth and the vagina. Plastic food wrap also can be used as a barrier.

**13 Can I get HIV from anal sex?**  
Yes. In fact, unprotected (without a condom) anal sex (intercourse) is considered to be very risky behavior. It is possible for either sex partner to become infected with HIV during anal sex. Not having (abstaining from) sex is the most effective way to avoid HIV. If people choose to have anal sex, they should use a latex condom. Most of the time, condoms work well. However, condoms are more likely to break during anal sex than during vaginal sex. Thus, even with a condom, anal sex can be risky. A person should use generous amounts of water-based lubricant in addition to the condom to reduce the chances of the condom breaking.

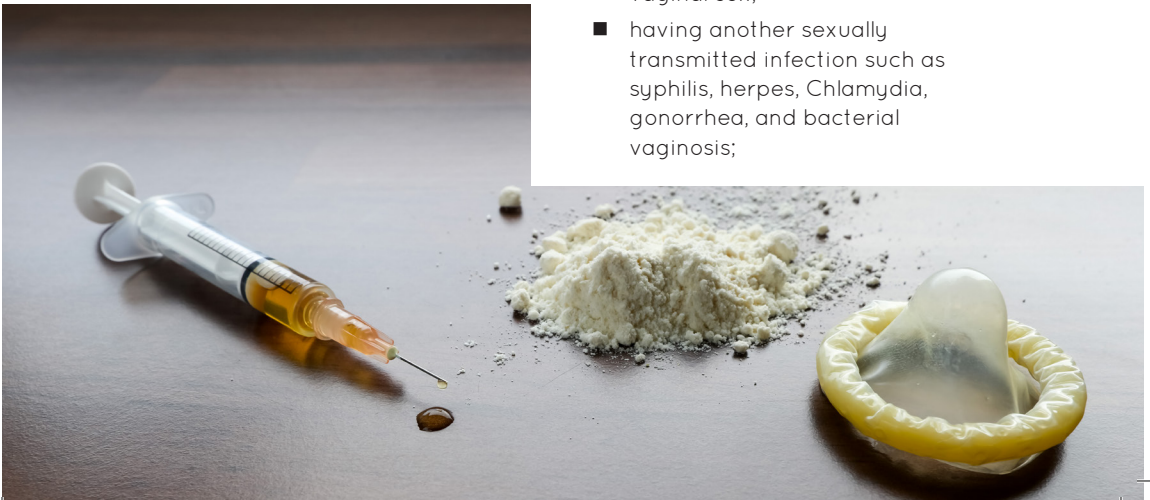
**14 What is the connection between alcohol, other drugs, and HIV?** Substance use, abuse and dependence have been closely associated with HIV infection since the beginning of the epidemic.

Although injection drug use (IDU) is a direct route of transmission, drinking, smoking, ingesting or inhaling drugs such as alcohol, crack cocaine, methamphetamine (meth) and amyl nitrite (poppers), miraa, bhang (marijuana), heroine, LSD are also associated with increased risk of HIV infection. These substances may increase HIV risk by reducing the users inhibitions to engage in risky sexual behavior.

Sharing needles and syringes is a direct route of HIV transmission

**15 How is HIV transmitted?** Behaviors and conditions that put individuals at greater risk of contracting HIV include:

- having unprotected anal or vaginal sex;
- having another sexually transmitted infection such as syphilis, herpes, Chlamydia, gonorrhea, and bacterial vaginosis;





### Using nonsterile needles for piercing or tattooing can lead to HIV infection

- sharing contaminated needles, syringes and other injecting equipment and drug solutions when injecting drugs;
- receiving unsafe injections, blood transfusions, medical procedures that involve unsterile cutting or piercing;
- Experiencing accidental needle stick injuries, including among health workers.
- Having multiple sexual partners
- Using nonsterile needles for piercing or tattooing

Other factors that may put you at risk of HIV infection include:

- Having been the victim of sexual assault

- Having sex while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Having been born of a HIV positive mother

### 16 How is HIV not transmitted?

- Saliva, tears, sweat, feces, urine, vomit or ear wax
- Kissing, hugging or touching
- Massage
- Shaking hands
- Insect or animal bites
- Living in the same house with someone who has HIV
- Sharing showers, bathrooms, pools or toilets with someone with HIV
- Touching public surfaces – like doorknobs, phone booths, or public benches
- Sharing food, drink or dishes
- Sharing a cup
- Sneezing
- Sharing items of clothing, bed linens or towels
- Sports, going to the gym, sharing exercise equipment

### 17 How do I protect myself from getting HIV?

- Abstinence
- Remain faithful in a relationship with an uninfected equally faithful partner with no other risk behavior
- Use male or female condoms correctly each time you have sex (oral, anal, vaginal).
- If you do use injection drugs don't share needles or syringes with another person.



- Avoid having sex under the influence of alcohol or drugs that may alter your ability to make safer sexual decisions
- Do not share piercing or tattoo equipment.

**18** **Is there a cure for HIV?**  
**There is currently no cure for HIV infection.** However there is treatment that make it possible for someone to live with HIV but avoid getting sick with AIDS. Effective antiretroviral (ARV) drugs can control the virus and help prevent transmission so that people with HIV, and those at substantial risk, can enjoy healthy and productive lives. ARVs help to prevent HIV from multiplying, and this helps the immune system “catch up” by killing off infected

cells and letting new immune cells survive. This helps the immune system to “rebuild” itself. ARVs help to prolong and improve the quality of life of those infected with HIV. Most current ARVs well tolerated with few side effects.

**19** **What does HAART stand for in relation to HIV treatment?**

Highly Active Anti-retroviral Therapy. A person living with HIV takes a combination of anti-retroviral drugs, commonly called combination therapy, to help stop the virus from reproducing within their immune system. These drugs are very expensive and can have a number of side effects. People living with HIV who choose to participate in H.A.A.R.T. must follow a strict daily schedule in order for the drugs to be effective. In Kenya, ARV's are given for free in all public health facilities.

**20** **What are STIs and how do they relate to HIV infection?** STI stands for “sexually transmitted infections.” STIs are infections that are passed on through the close, intimate contact that usually accompanies sexual activities. Some common STIs include the following: Chlamydia, Trichomoniasis, Gonorrhea, Human papilloma virus (HPV), genital herpes and syphilis.

If you have ever had an STI, you may have been exposed to HIV as well, and should consider getting tested for HIV. If you currently have an STI, you need to see a healthcare provider as soon as possible. Having an STI causes the skin to break down and can increase the risk of getting HIV, or passing HIV to others if an HIV-infected person has an STI. Some STIs can be present without causing symptoms. Therefore, if you think you are at risk of contracting STIs, you should be tested routinely for both HIV and STIs, even if you have no symptoms. You can protect yourself from getting STI by using a condom correctly and at every sexual encounter

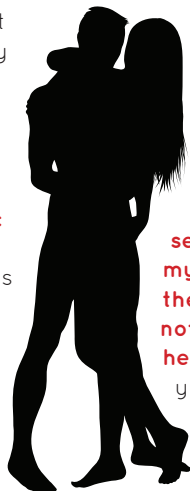
**21** **What is the most common opportunistic infection affecting people living with HIV?** Tuberculosis (TB) is the most common presenting illness among people with HIV. It is fatal

if undetected or untreated and is the leading cause of death among people with HIV- responsible for 1 of every 3 HIV-associated deaths. Early detection of TB and prompt linkage to TB treatment and ART can prevent these deaths. It is strongly advised that HIV testing services integrate screening for TB and that all individuals diagnosed with HIV and active TB urgently use ART.

**22** **Are there any special precautions I need to take to protect myself if my loved one has HIV?** No. As long as you aren't having unprotected sex with them, or sharing needles, you are not at risk for getting HIV from them through casual contact (hugging, kissing, sharing dishes, sharing bathrooms, etc.). Standard cleaning practices will work just fine, since HIV dies outside in open air very quickly anyway.

If you are having sex or sharing needles with your loved one who has HIV, then it would be good to get tested for HIV. Also, if you haven't already, start using protection every time you have sex and new needles for your own injections.

**23** **What do I do in case I have unprotected sex and I am not sure about my partners HIV status? Is there a way I can be helped not contract HIV just in case he/she was positive?** Yes. Visit your nearest health facility





immediately you need to start PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) within 72 hours as this helps lower risk of contracting HIV. However you will be required to also take a HIV test to determine your status.

In future use condoms correctly and consistently to avoid being at risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections

**24** **What do I do if I experience a condom burst during sex?** Most condoms burst due to wrong procedure when putting them on. Visit your nearest health facility immediately. You need to start PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) within 72 hours as this helps lower risk of contracting HIV. However you will be required to also take a HIV test to determine your status.

In future use condoms correctly and consistently to avoid being at risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

**25** **How effective are latex condoms in preventing HIV?** Correct and consistent use of Male and female condoms is effective in preventing sexual transmission of HIV. Evidence shows that male latex condoms have an 85% or greater protective effect against

HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).The surest way to avoid transmission of HIV is to abstain from sexual intercourse or having one sexual partner of known HIV status.

**26** **Why is it important to test pregnant women for HIV?** The transmission

of HIV from an HIV-positive mother to her child during pregnancy, labor, delivery or breastfeeding is called vertical or mother-to-child transmission

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(MTCT). If a mother is HIV-positive during pregnancy, HIV treatment can improve her overall health and can protect an unborn baby from contracting HIV before, during delivery and after birth.

Prevention of MTCT (PMTCT) involves providing ARVs to mothers and infants during pregnancy, labor and the post-natal period, and offering life-



long treatment to HIV-positive pregnant women regardless of their CD4 count.

**27 What is the importance of Medical male circumcision in HIV prevention?** Medical male circumcision, when safely provided by well-trained health professionals, reduces the risk of heterosexually acquired HIV infection in men by approximately 60%. This is a key intervention in generalized epidemic settings with high HIV prevalence and low male circumcision rates. Medical male circumcision should be considered as part of a comprehensive HIV prevention package and should never replace other known methods of prevention, such as female and male condoms.

**28 What is Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)** PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. PrEP is away for people who don't have HIV but who are at very high risk of getting it to prevent HIV infection by taking a pill every day. The pill contains two medicines that are also used to treat HIV. If you take PrEP and are exposed to HIV through sex or injecting drug use, these medicines can work to keep the virus from taking hold in your body.

PrEP is not for everyone but is considered for people who are HIV negative and at very high risk for HIV infection.

PrEP is now recommended for use in Kenya. Visit your nearest health facility for more information.

**29 Post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV (PEP)** Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is the use of ARV drugs within 72 hours of exposure to HIV in order to prevent infection. PEP includes counseling, first aid care, HIV testing, and administering of a 28-day course of ARV drugs with follow-up care. PEP prevents HIV in people who have been accidentally exposed to HIV such as health workers or through unprotected sexual exposures or sexual assault.

**30 If one is sexually assaulted, what should they do?**

- Medical: management of injuries, provision of Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV transmission, Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP), prevention



and treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), forensic collection and management (collection of physical evidence and samples, filling in of Post Rape Care (PRC) and P3 forms etc

- Psycho-social care: trauma counseling of survivor and family/relatives, HIV counseling and Testing (HCT) and adherence counseling  
Legal counseling and support: referral to police

- Referral for specialized services (medical, psycho-social and legal)
- Do not wash until after you have had a medical and forensic examination because important evidence might be washed away.



## IF ONE IS SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

- Go to the nearest health facility and get HIV Post Exposure Prophylaxis, Emergency Contraceptive Pills and other emergency medication
- Do not wash until after you have had a medical and forensic examination
- Seek Support (medical, psycho-social and legal)

