

What is HIV?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus which attacks and kills certain cells (called CD4 cells) in the immune system of the body.

HIV enters the body through:

- Unprotected sex.
- Mother to child transmission during pregnancy, labour or breast feeding.
- Injection drug use.
- Needle stick injuries.
- HIV-infected blood products.

HIV treatment - antiretrovirals (ARVs)

- Antiretrovirals (ARVs) have given millions of people living with HIV a new life.
- ARVs are powerful, life-saving drugs that control HIV by slowing down the way the virus reproduces.
- ARVs are not a cure for AIDS; they can have side effects and sometimes can be difficult to take.
- ARVs are the best treatment available at the moment and enable HIV-positive people to live longer and healthier lives.

When should I start treatment?

As soon as possible after you are diagnosed and at the direction of your health care provider. A CD4 count test is used to find out how HIV has affected your body and how strong your immune system is.

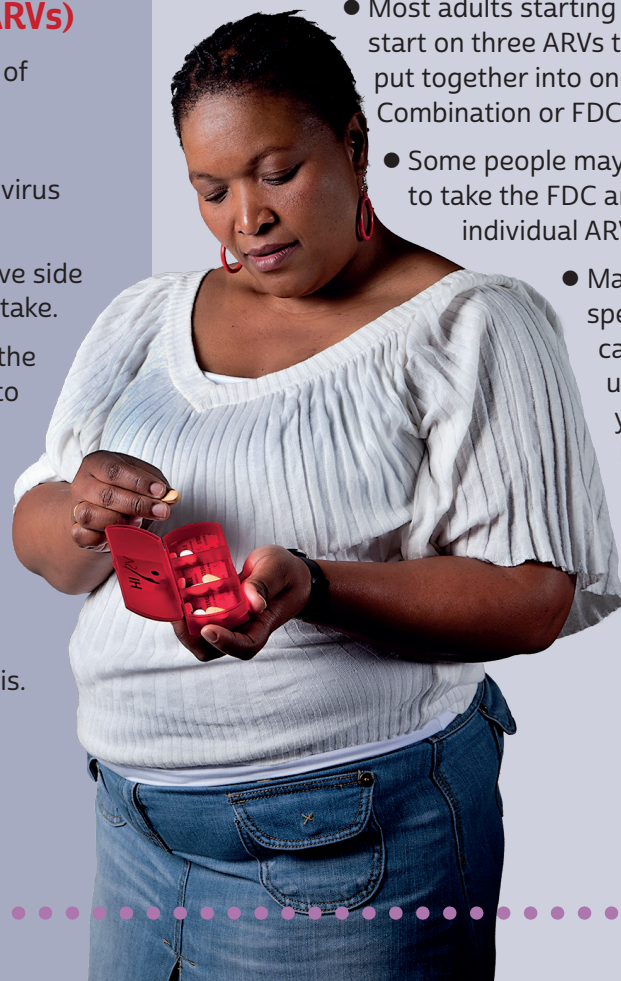
If you are pregnant or breast feeding and you are HIV positive you will need antiretroviral treatment.

If you have TB - Everyone that is HIV positive and has TB should start ARVs.

If you become sick with HIV and have serious and ongoing symptoms of feeling tired and weak, weight loss, skin changes such as rashes, mouth infections or chest infections, your health care worker may advise that you start ARVs.

Starting treatment

- Most adults starting treatment will start on three ARVs that have been put together into one pill (Fixed Dose Combination or FDC).
- Some people may not be able to take the FDC and will take 3 individual ARVs instead.
- Make sure that you speak to your health care worker and understand what you are taking, how to take it and what the possible side effects are.



Side effects of treatment

- Many treatments have unwanted side effects such as headaches and nausea when you first start taking them but these usually improve in a few weeks.
- Different treatments cause different side effects and affect people differently.
- Before you start treatment make sure your health care worker explains the possible side effects to you and what to expect.
- If you are concerned about any of the following consult your health care worker immediately: nausea and vomiting, tiredness, no appetite and weight loss, diarrhoea, stomach pains, dark yellow or brown urine, yellowing of eyes or skin, difficulty breathing, skin rash and ulcers in the mouth, eyes or nostrils.

Taking treatment correctly - adherence and resistance

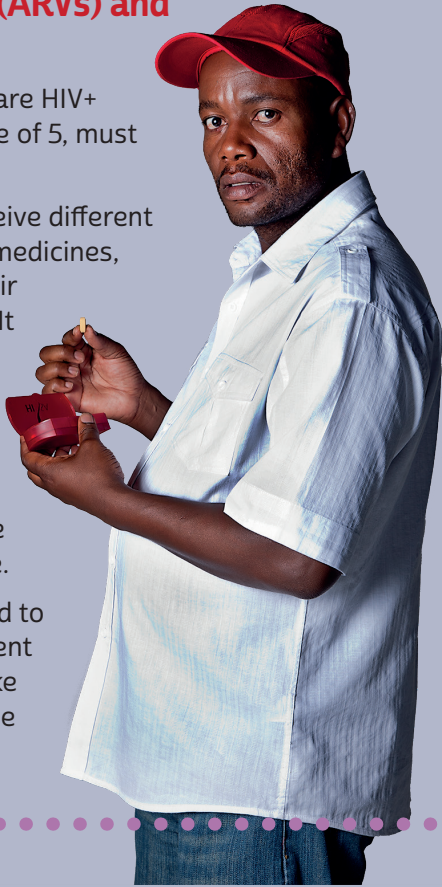
- Taking treatment incorrectly - too much, too little or not at all - can cause serious problems.
- Taking too much medicine or taking it too often may cause side effects.
- Taking too little because you feel unwell or share with family or friends can cause resistance.
- Resistance to ARVs develops when there isn't enough medicine in your blood to kill the virus and means that even if you start taking the right amounts in future the treatment will no longer work.
- Remember treatment is for life and once you have started you must not stop..
- See our pamphlet on adherence for more details.

Positive living and what it means to you

- If you take your treatment properly and take care of your health you can live a long and healthy life – you can work, have children and lead a normal life.
- It is important that you look after your health by eating a balanced diet, getting exercise and rest.
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol.
- It is important that you get support from family and friends or from another person living with HIV – think about joining a support group or talking to others in the same situation.
- If you are feeling anxious or depressed, seek counselling from your pastor or someone who has experience in dealing with these issues.

HIV treatment (ARVs) and children

- All children, who are HIV+ and under the age of 5, must be on treatment.
- Children may receive different combinations of medicines, depending on their individual needs. It is very important that children only take their own medicines and that they never share these with other people.
- Children also need to take their treatment every day and take it at the same time every day.



- Medicines might come in the form of tablets or liquids.
- If you are giving liquid medication, make sure that you know exactly how much to give and that you measure it out properly each and every time.
- If you are giving pills to the child, make sure that you know exactly how many to give each and every time.
- Remember to give the child lots of praise after each dose – this is called positive reinforcement.
- Always store ARVs in a safe place, out of reach of toddlers and young children.
- It is important to never run out of medication – make sure that you have a new monthly supply of ARVs before they run out.

For more information: www.hivsa.com



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• The people in the images are models and do not necessarily have HIV or any condition portrayed in this pamphlet.



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What YOU need to know about...

HIV treatment (ARVs)

