

ENGLISH





**HIV**  
**WHAT**  
**YOU**  
**NEED**  
**TO**  
**KNOW**





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# INTRODUCTION



# WHO IS THIS BOOKLET FOR?

**THIS BOOKLET IS FOR ANYONE  
INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT ABOUT HIV.**

**IT EXPLAINS WHAT  
IT MEANS TO HAVE  
HIV, AND WAYS TO  
PROTECT YOURSELF  
FROM GETTING HIV  
AND PASSING IT ON  
TO OTHERS. IT ALSO  
EXPLAINS HOW TO  
GET TESTED FOR  
HIV AND HOW HIV IS  
TREATED.**

# DID YOU KNOW?

- **THERE ARE WAYS YOU CAN PREVENT YOURSELF AND YOUR SEXUAL PARTNERS FROM GETTING HIV.**
- **THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN GET TESTED FOR HIV.**
- **WITH HIV TREATMENT YOU CAN LIVE A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE.**
- **IF YOU HAVE HIV, THERE ARE MANY SERVICES THAT CAN HELP.**

## THIS BOOKLET IS FOR YOU, IF YOU:

- Have had more than one sexual partner and you didn't always use a condom
- Have a partner who is living with HIV
- Have a partner who is living with HIV and you want to have a baby
- Are a man who has sex with other men
- Have had sex without a condom in a country where HIV is common
- Have ever shared needles or other equipment to inject drugs
- Have had injections, tattoos, piercings or medical procedures overseas and you are not sure that clean equipment was used.

## SOME QUESTIONS THIS BOOKLET ANSWERS:

- What is HIV?
- How can I get HIV?
- What does HIV do to my body?
- How can I protect myself from getting HIV?
- Should I get tested for HIV?
- Where can I get an HIV test?
- What HIV treatments are available in Australia?
- What are some of the services that can help me?
- What are my rights if I'm HIV positive?



# WHAT IS HIV?



# HIV STANDS FOR: HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

A person becomes infected with HIV (HIV positive) when the virus enters their body.

HIV attacks your immune system, which protects your body against disease.

## ARE HIV AND AIDS THE SAME THING?

HIV/AIDS is often written as one word, but

**HIV and AIDS are different.**

HIV is the virus that damages your immune system. Without treatment HIV can cause AIDS.

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is when the immune system is very damaged and your body can't fight off infections. AIDS makes you very sick.

**In Australia, almost everyone who is on treatment for HIV does not develop AIDS.**

Many new treatments are available. They fight HIV and reduce the damage that HIV does to your immune system.

## HOW DO YOU GET HIV?

HIV is found in body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. HIV can only be caught when body fluids from a person with HIV enter the body of another person.

## YOU CAN GET HIV FROM:

- Having vaginal or anal sex without a condom
- Sharing needles and other equipment for injecting drugs
- Unsterile body piercing or tattooing
- Blood transfusions and medical procedures in some countries.

In Australia, blood transfusions and medical procedures are safe.

HIV can also be passed on by a mother to her child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding if the mother is HIV positive.

## YOU CANNOT GET HIV BY:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Kissing, hugging or crying
- Sharing a bed with someone who has HIV
- Sharing food with someone who has HIV
- Sharing a toilet or a shower with someone who has HIV
- A bite from an insect or mosquito.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HIV?

You may not have any symptoms when you first get HIV.

But in some cases, when you first catch HIV you may feel sick, like you have the flu, feel tired and have:

- Fever
- Bad sweats in bed at night
- Skin rash
- Aches and pains.

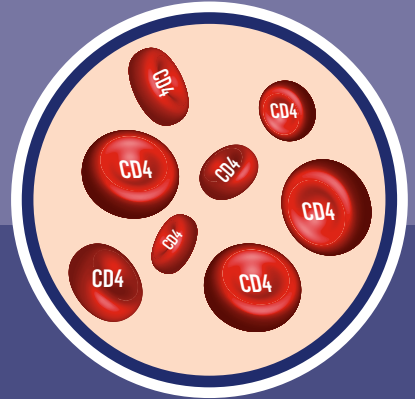
IT IS IMPORTANT TO TEST FOR HIV REGULARLY.

# HOW DOES HIV AFFECT

## HIV LIFE CYCLE



Your immune system protects your body against infection and disease and keeps you healthy.

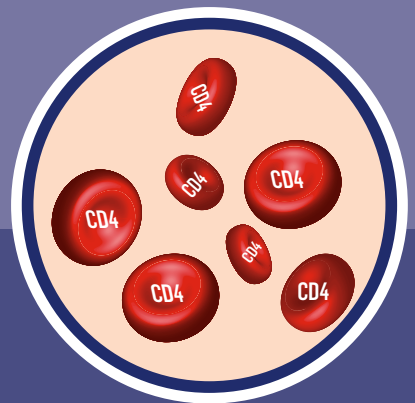


It is made up of many different cells which work together to find and destroy viruses, bacteria and other germs that make you sick. Some of these cells are called CD4 cells (or T4 cells).

## HIV LIFE CYCLE



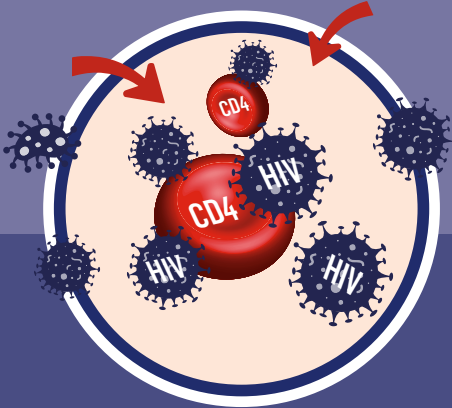
Your immune system protects your body against infection and disease and keeps you healthy.



It is made up of many different cells which work together to find and destroy viruses, bacteria and other germs that make you sick. Some of these cells are called CD4 cells (or T4 cells).

# YOUR BODY?

## WITHOUT TREATMENT

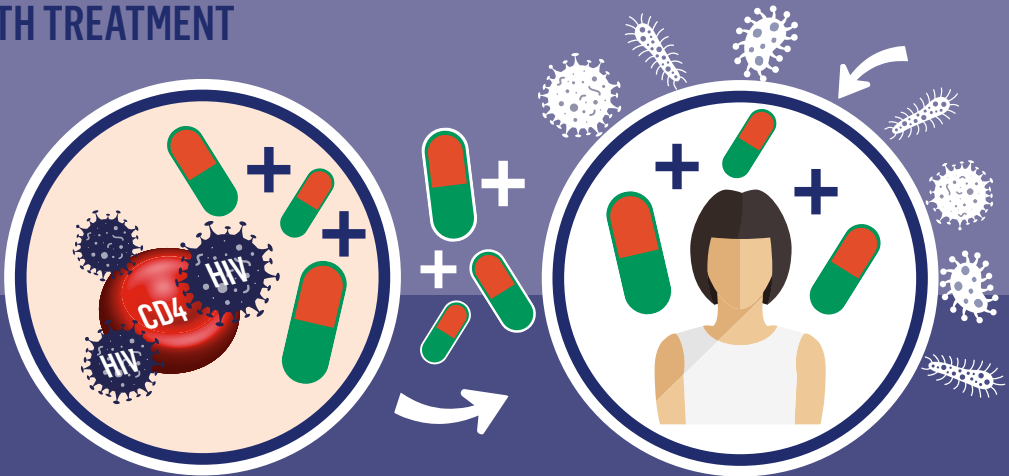


HIV attacks and destroys your CD4 cells and damages your immune system.



As your immune system gets weak, you are more likely to get serious infections which may lead to death. Over time, if you are not on HIV treatment, the number of CD4 cells in your body will become very low. This is when you can develop AIDS.

## WITH TREATMENT



HIV attacks and destroys your CD4 cells and damages your immune system. HIV treatment is available, effective and will reduce the amount of virus in your body.

With treatment, the HIV virus stops damaging your immune system. The earlier you start treatment the better for your health.



# TESTING FOR HIV

## HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF I HAVE HIV?

**The only way to find out if you have HIV is by having a HIV test. In NSW, HIV testing is free, easy and confidential.**

At some clinics you don't need a Medicare Card and don't need to give your real name if you don't want to. The clinic will need at least two ways of contacting you about your result, which can be a correct mobile phone number, email address or postal address.

For more information on how to find clinics call the Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624 or the Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service on 02 9515 1234.

There are many ways you can get a HIV test. You can:

- Go to a Sexual Health Clinic
- Go to a Rapid Test Clinic called a[TEST]  
*(only if you are a man who has sex with other men)*
- Ask your doctor (GP) for a test
- Do a Dried Blood Spot (DBS) HIV test at home.

For more information on the different types of tests see page 15.

**It is normal to worry about testing and what the results will be, but testing is the only way to know if you have HIV.**

Many people don't know they have HIV, which means they are not getting the health benefits of being on HIV treatment. Not knowing about HIV could also mean you pass it on to others.

If you're worried about confidentiality, talk with your doctor, a Sexual Health Clinic or an a[TEST] clinic (see page 15).

Any information that a health care professional has about you is private.

## WHO SHOULD GET TESTED?

**Anyone who thinks they may have HIV should get tested.**

You should get tested for HIV if you:

- Have had more than one sexual partner and you didn't always use a condom
- Have a partner who is living with HIV
- Have a partner who is living with HIV and you want to have a baby
- Are a man who has sex with other men
- Have had sex without a condom in a country where HIV is common
- Have ever shared needles or other equipment to inject drugs
- Have had injections, tattoos, piercings or medical procedures overseas and you are not sure that clean equipment was used.

# HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GET TESTED?

If you never tested for HIV, there are many good reasons to test for HIV now.

More of us need to get tested more often. Talk to your doctor or sexual health clinic to find out how often you should get tested.

## TYPES OF TESTS

TYPE OF HIV TEST	HOW DOES THE TEST WORK?	WHO CAN HAVE THE TEST?
<b>HIV BLOOD TEST</b> (HIV Antibody Test)	This is the most common type of test. Your doctor takes a blood sample and sends it to a laboratory to test for HIV. If your test shows HIV, the doctor will repeat the test to confirm the result.	Anyone who wants a HIV test
<b>RAPID HIV TEST</b> a[Test]	A small drop of blood from your finger is used to test for HIV. A result is ready in 30 minutes. There are three possible results: <b>Negative</b> - there is no HIV <b>Reactive</b> - there is HIV. You will need to have an HIV Blood Test to confirm the result. <b>Invalid</b> - the test didn't work. You have to do it again.	Men who have sex with men
<b>DRIED BLOOD TEST</b> (DBS) HIV Test	The DBS finger stick test is ordered online and you do it at home. You use the small needle provided in the test kit to collect a few drops of blood from your finger and send it to a laboratory for testing. You get the result in a week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Men who have sex with men.</li><li>• People from countries where HIV is common.</li><li>• People with sexual partners from countries where HIV is common.</li></ul> You must be over 16 years-of-age and live in NSW. You do not need a Medicare card.

If you have a positive HIV test, start treatment early. This will keep you healthy and your immune system strong. Treatment will reduce the amount of HIV in your body which will stop you passing HIV to your sexual partners.

## WHERE TO GET THE TEST

A General Practitioner (GP)  
A Sexual Health Clinic  
Family Planning NSW

Rapid HIV testing centres, called a[TEST] can be found at:  
[www.endinghiv.org.au/test-often/where-to-get-tested/](http://www.endinghiv.org.au/test-often/where-to-get-tested/)

Order the DBS HIV test kit online at:  
<https://www.hivtest.health.nsw.gov.au/>

You will receive the test kit by post in a confidential envelope. It has everything you need to do the test.

## HOW MUCH DOES THE TEST COST?

The test is free at GPs who bulk bill, sexual health clinics and Family Planning NSW.

If your GP does not bulk bill you may pay for the service.

FREE

FREE



# TREATING HIV



# HOW IS HIV TREATED?

**The HIV treatments available today are very effective.**

Treatment for HIV is with medications called antiretrovirals (ARVs).

Antiretrovirals do not get rid of HIV, but they reduce the amount of virus in your body and stop the virus from damaging your immune system. Once the virus has been reduced to very low levels (usually within a few weeks of starting treatment), HIV cannot be passed from one person to another.

If you have HIV and you are on HIV treatment, you can live a full, long and healthy life. It is better for your health if you start HIV treatment as soon as possible.

## **THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT HIV TREATMENTS:**

- **HIV treatments are very effective but treatment is life-long.**
- **The earlier you start taking HIV treatments the better your health will be.**
- **You need to take the treatment exactly as your doctor says, and make sure you don't miss any pills.**
- **Some people get side effects. If you have any, it is important to tell your doctor and they can put you onto a different treatment to stop the side effects.**
- **Taking antiretrovirals is an important decision that you need to discuss with your doctor. Take time to ask questions and make sure you have all the information you need.**

# WHERE CAN I GET HIV TREATMENT AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The best person to talk to about treatments is a doctor who specialises in HIV. If your doctor is not experienced in HIV, make an appointment with a doctor at a Sexual Health Clinic or ask your doctor to refer you to an HIV specialist.

Your doctor will give you a prescription for the HIV medication that is right for you. You need to take this prescription to:

- **Hospital chemist:** to get your medication from a hospital chemist, it is important to call before you go to make sure that they are open.
- **Local chemist:** ask your local chemist if they sell your HIV medication. Plan ahead when you need more medication and allow time for the chemist to order it in. Some local chemists can deliver your medication to you for free. All chemists must keep your personal information private.
- **Online chemist:** you can buy your HIV medications on the internet and have them posted to your home or to another address if you prefer.

In New South Wales (NSW), treatment is **free** for anyone who has HIV (HIV positive). You do not need a Medicare card to get free treatment.

**ASK YOUR DOCTOR FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

# COMMON HIV LANGUAGE

Some of the words your doctor will use when you are on treatment are:

## VIRAL LOAD

**Viral load is used to describe how much HIV is in your blood.**

If your viral load is high, it means your immune system is being attacked and weakened.

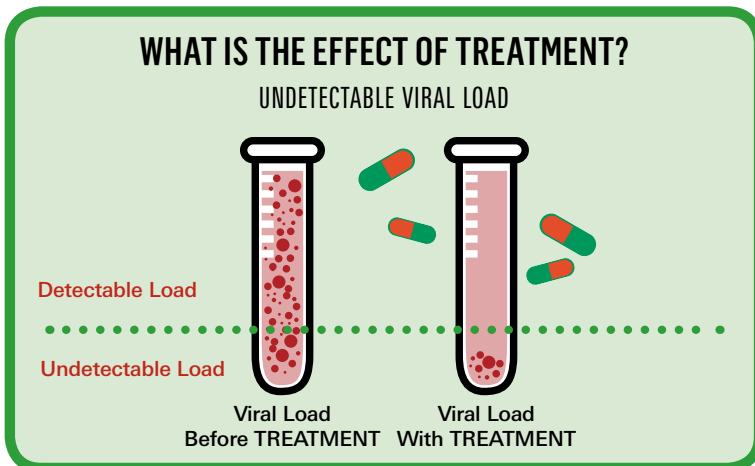
If your viral load is low or undetectable it means your immune system is not being attacked and you are much less likely to get sick or develop AIDS.

A test to measure your viral load shows how well your HIV treatments are working. It can help you and your doctor decide if your treatments are working or if there is a need to change your HIV treatments.

## UNDETECTABLE VIRAL LOAD

**Undetectable viral load** means that HIV is still present in your body, but in very small amounts. The amount of HIV in the blood is so small that the test cannot find it.

**When your viral load is undetectable, HIV is not damaging your immune system and you cannot pass HIV to other people.**



By taking HIV treatments as your doctor tells you, your viral load will become undetectable.

You will need to have regular blood tests to check your viral load. You need to keep on taking your medication regularly to keep your viral load undetectable.

If you are living with HIV, and do not have a Medicare Card, talk to your doctor or contact a support service (see page 13) for more information and support.

## MONITORING YOUR HEALTH

Working with your doctor to stay healthy and protect yourself from other infections is an important part of living well with HIV. Regular check-ups are very important so your doctor can check for any changes in your health and advise you on what to do.

## COMPLIMENTARY THERAPIES

Some people living with HIV use complimentary therapies as well as taking HIV medications (antiretrovirals).

Complimentary therapies include:

- Acupuncture
- Homoeopathy
- Hypnotherapy
- Massage
- Meditation
- Naturopathy
- Traditional medicine
- Vitamins.

Complementary therapies cannot treat or cure HIV, but may help with side effects from your HIV treatments.

Tell your doctor if you are using any complimentary therapies, as these may affect your HIV treatment.



# PREVENTING HIV



**You can protect yourself and others from HIV by:**

## **USING CONDOMS AND LUBRICANT**

This can help protect yourself and others from some infections that you can get from sex - sexually transmissible infections (STIs), including HIV.

Condoms come in many different shapes, sizes and colours. You might need to try a few different types to find the one that's right for you.

Condoms should only be used with water-based lubricant. Oils and Vaseline can weaken the condom and it might break.

You can buy condoms and lubricant from:

- Chemists
- Supermarkets
- Convenience stores
- Vending machines in men's and women's toilets.

You can get free condoms and lubricant from:

- Family Planning clinics
- Community health centres
- Sexual health clinics
- ACON (see page 35).

## TAKING TREATMENT AS PREVENTION (TasP)

If you're living with HIV, taking HIV treatments as ordered by your doctor will make your viral load undetectable. Having an undetectable viral load means you cannot pass HIV to other people.

## TAKING PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PrEP)

**PrEP is a way of protecting yourself from getting HIV, by taking HIV medication prescribed by a doctor. You can choose to take the HIV medication as a pill or as an injection.**

If you choose to take PrEP pills, you can take the pill daily, on-demand (when needed), or periodically (from time to time). All of these are effective in preventing HIV. Find out which works best for you using the PrEP dosing frequency tool: [endinghiv.org.au/stay-safe/prep-dosing-frequency-tool/](http://endinghiv.org.au/stay-safe/prep-dosing-frequency-tool/).

Another option is injectable PrEP, which is as effective as the pills. Injectable PrEP provides longer protection. You only need to go for an injection every two months.

PrEP does not stop you from getting other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), so it is still important to use condoms to help you avoid getting other STIs. Talk to your doctor or Sexual Health Clinic to find out if PrEP is right for you. You can call the Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624 or visit [shil.nsw.gov.au](http://shil.nsw.gov.au).



## TAKING POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)

**PEP is taking HIV treatments after you think you have come into contact with HIV, for four weeks, to help protect you from getting HIV.**

PEP is for anyone who thinks they may have come into contact with HIV because they have:

- Had sex without a condom
- Shared needles or other equipment to inject drugs

**You should start taking PEP as soon as possible. It will only work if you take it within 72 hours after contact with HIV.**

If your doctor thinks PEP is right for you, you will need to take it every day for 28 days.

You can get PEP from sexual health clinics, doctors who specialise in HIV and hospitals.

# USING STERILE EQUIPMENT TO INJECT DRUGS

**Only using your own or new needles, syringes and other equipment is the best way to protect yourself and others from HIV.**

Free needles and equipment are available from Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) and some chemists.

**You can get new injecting equipment wherever you see this sign:** →





# USING THE HEALTH SYSTEM



# USING THE HEALTH SYSTEM

The health system is made up of services, organisations and people who provide health care. These include hospitals, clinics, doctors, nurses, social workers and interpreters.

Finding the information and services you need can be difficult, especially if you are not well or if your English is limited. You may need to use some health services you have not used before. It is important that you know which health care services are available and how they can help you.

**Many health services are free if you have a Medicare Card.**

This is called bulk billing. However, you may still have to pay for medication or some tests that are ordered for you.

If you have a Medicare Card, always ask if bulk billing is available before you see the doctor or any other health care worker.

Always take your Medicare Card with you when visiting your doctor, a clinic or a hospital.

Your Medicare details are confidential.

**If you do not have a Medicare Card, you can use some Sexual Health Clinics at no cost.**

To find a Sexual Health Clinic near you, go to:  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx)

# ROLES OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AND SERVICES IN HIV

## **GENERAL PRACTITIONERS (GP)**

General Practitioners (GP) are doctors that work in the community instead of hospitals. You can visit a GP at a medical centre, or a private practice. Some GPs bulk bill if you have a Medicare card (you do not pay), but some GPs charge an extra fee for their service. It is always important to check if there will be a fee to see the GP.

If you have HIV, it's important to find a GP who understands HIV and has experience treating people who are living with HIV. Not all GPs are able to prescribe HIV treatment. If your GP can't prescribe HIV treatment, they can refer you to a GP who can, or to a specialist doctor.

A GP is able to prescribe PrEP, so if you think PrEP is right for you, speak to your GP.

## **SPECIALISTS**

Specialists are doctors who are trained in a particular health issue. Specialists in HIV medicine will supervise every stage of your treatment and care. You must have a referral letter from your GP to book an appointment with an HIV specialist.

## SEXUAL HEALTH CLINICS

Sexual health clinics are located across NSW. These clinics provide medical services, counselling and support in sexual and reproductive health, including HIV.

All sexual health clinics:

- Have staff who are very experienced in HIV
- Are free.

Some sexual health clinics:

- Are open some evenings
- Do not ask for identification
- Will see people who do not have a Medicare Card.

## HOSPITALS

Hospitals provide specialised treatment for people who are unwell, including people living with HIV. Some HIV specialists are located in hospitals.

## COUNSELLORS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

Many services have counsellors, social workers and psychologists you can talk to you about your feelings and find solutions to some of the challenges of living with HIV.

A counsellor or social worker can:

- Help you find services
- Explain things about HIV treatment you might not understand
- Provide emotional support
- Help you decide who to tell that you have HIV, how to tell them, and even be with you when you do tell them.



## INTERPRETERS

If you don't feel comfortable speaking in English, you can have an interpreter present when you are talking with health care workers or other services.

The interpreter's job is to translate everything you and the health care worker say to each other.

By having an interpreter you can:

- Understand everything you are being told
- Be sure everything you say is understood
- Ask questions and get answers
- Understand and consent to tests and treatment.

Like all health care professionals, interpreters must protect your confidentiality.

Telephone interpreters are also available anywhere in Australia. This service is called Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). The service is free and does not need to be booked in advance.

**To use it call: 131450.**

# HIV SERVICES

## **MULTICULTURAL HIV AND HEPATITIS (MHAHS)**

MHAHS provides support to migrants and refugees living with HIV and helps people understand their HIV, use health and other services and provides emotional support.

The service has male and female support workers from Asian, African, European, Middle Eastern and South American backgrounds who understand what it is like to be living with HIV/AIDS and dealing with cultural issues. This service is free.

For more information go to [www.mhahs.org.au](http://www.mhahs.org.au)

Phone: 02 9515 1234

## **ACON**

ACON specialises in HIV prevention, HIV support and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) health. ACON helps people with HIV take control of their health, as well as the health of their partners, by providing information, programs and services including counselling, support and support groups.

For more information go to [www.acon.org.au](http://www.acon.org.au)

Phone: 02 9206 2000

## **POZHET**

Pozhet promotes the health and wellbeing of heterosexuals with HIV, their partners and family across NSW. It provides education and support to heterosexuals living with HIV and links people with health and social services. Pozhet also provides information about HIV prevention to all heterosexuals.

For more information go to [www.pozhet.org.au](http://www.pozhet.org.au)  
Phone: 1800 812 404

## **POSITIVE LIFE NSW**

Positive Life NSW works to promote a positive image of people living with and affected by HIV with the aim of stopping prejudice, isolation, stigma and discrimination. Positive Life aims to change systems and practices that discriminate against people living with HIV, their partners, friends, family and carers in NSW.

For more information go to [www.positivelife.org.au](http://www.positivelife.org.au)  
Phone: 02 9206 2177 or 1800 245 677



# YOUR RIGHTS AND HIV



## **SOME COMMON CONCERNS PEOPLE HAVE ABOUT HIV:**

I'm alive but I don't feel like I'm living in the world because I have locked myself away from my community.


I'm afraid to get a test. What if it is positive? My family will disown me. I would rather not know.

In my country there is lots of prejudice against people living with HIV.

My family were embarrassed and didn't want to talk to me.

I don't want my visa cancelled and have to go back home. I am free to be who I am in Australia.

In my culture, we don't talk about sex even with my gay friends.



Stigma is when someone experience negative beliefs, feelings and views because of their gender, sexuality, race, colour, health problems or religious beliefs.

When a person is seen as different, they can be judged and discriminated against and experience stigma. This can cause people living with HIV to become isolated and may stop people from getting tested for HIV, starting treatment and using health and support services.

In Australia, it is against the law for any person or health care worker to discriminate against you, judge you, criticise you or refuse you service because of your gender, sexuality, race, colour, health problems or religious beliefs.

## HIV AND THE LAW

It is important to know about HIV and the law.

**In NSW, by law, you don't need to tell someone that you have HIV before having sex as long as you take reasonable precautions to protect them from getting HIV.**

Reasonable precautions to avoid passing on HIV may include:

- Using a condom
- Having an undetectable viral load (from being on HIV treatment)
- Your sexual partner is taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

If you are living with HIV, you should ask your doctor what reasonable precautions you can take to protect your partners from HIV.

For more information visit NSW Health at:  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/phact/Pages/pha-s79.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/phact/Pages/pha-s79.aspx)





# LIST OF SERVICES



# SUPPORT SERVICES

## **Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service**

[www.mhahs.org.au](http://www.mhahs.org.au)  
Sydney: 02 9515 1234  
Free call: 1800 108 098

Level 2, 18 Marsden Street  
Camperdown, NSW 2050  
Email: [info@mhahs.org.au](mailto:info@mhahs.org.au)

## **ACON**

[www.acon.org.au](http://www.acon.org.au)  
Phone: 02 9206 2000  
Free call: 1800 063 060

414 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills, NSW 2010  
Email: [acon@acon.org.au](mailto:acon@acon.org.au)

## **Positive Life NSW**

[www.positivelife.org.au](http://www.positivelife.org.au)  
Phone: 02 9206 2177  
Free call: 1800 245 677

Suite 5.2, Level 5, 414 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills, NSW 2010  
Email: [contact@positivelife.org.au](mailto:contact@positivelife.org.au)

## **Pozhet (Heterosexual HIV Service NSW)**

[pozhet.org.au](http://pozhet.org.au)  
Heterosexual HIV infoline: 1800 812 404

18 Marsden Street  
Camperdown, NSW 2050  
Email: [pozhet@pozhet.org.au](mailto:pozhet@pozhet.org.au)

## **Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF)**

BGF is a NSW statewide service that provides support and information to people living with HIV.

[www.bgf.org.au](http://www.bgf.org.au)  
Free call: 1800 651 011

Level 3, 111-117 Devonshire Street  
Darlinghurst, NSW 2010  
Phone: 02 9283 8666  
Email: [bgf@bgf.org.au](mailto:bgf@bgf.org.au)

## **NUAA (NSW Users and AIDS Association)**

NUAA is led by people with an experience of drug use. They provide information and support to people in NSW who use drugs.

[nuaa.org.au](http://nuaa.org.au)  
Phone: 02 8354 7300  
Free call: 1800 644 413

345 Crown Street  
Surry Hills, NSW 2010

## WHERE TO GET TESTED?

Search for a HIV test site, by location  
[www.endinghiv.org.au/test-often/  
where-to-get-tested](http://www.endinghiv.org.au/test-often/where-to-get-tested)

### **Sexual Health Services**

NSW Sexual Health Infolink  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/  
pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx)  
Free call : 1800 451 624

## LEGAL SERVICES

### **HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (HALC)**

HALC provides free legal assistance to people in NSW living with HIV or hepatitis.

[www.halc.org.au](http://www.halc.org.au)  
Phone: 02 9206 2060

414 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills, NSW 2010  
Email: [halc@halc.org.au](mailto:halc@halc.org.au)

# TERMS YOU MAY HEAR WHEN TALKING ABOUT HIV

## **Adherence**

Adherence is when you take HIV treatment every day as your doctor has ordered.

## **Antibody**

Antibodies are produced by the body to fight bacteria and viruses such as HIV.

## **ARV**

Antiretroviral medications are medicines used to treat HIV.

## **Bulk billing**

If your doctor bulk bills, your visit is free because Medicare pays the doctor. If your doctor does not bulk bill, you pay the doctor and then you claim some money back from Medicare.

## **CD4 cells**

CD4 cells are a type of immune system cell in the body that HIV attacks and kills over time. The lower the number of CD4 cells, the weaker the immune system.

## **Clinical trials**

Clinical trials are research studies where people volunteer to test new treatments, to manage various medical conditions.

## **Condoms**

A thin rubber (latex) bag which fits on a man's erect penis to stop pregnancy, and reduce the chance of passing on HIV and other STIs.

## **Confidentiality**

Any information that a health care professional has about you is private. A health care professional can only repeat what you say with your permission or in very special circumstances.

## **Diagnosis**

The conclusion a doctor may reach after examining, doing tests and talking with their patients.

## **Dried Blood Spot (DBS) HIV Test**

A finger stick HIV test that is easy, free, confidential, and can be ordered online.

## **HIV negative**

Someone who does not have HIV.

## **HIV positive**

Someone who is living with HIV.

## **HIV status**

HIV status is about whether you are HIV positive or HIV negative.

## **HIV test**

Blood test used to find HIV antibodies. It is also called a HIV Antibody Test.

## **Infection**

A germ in / or on the body that makes you sick. Infections can be caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi or parasites.

## **Lubricant**

Lubricant is a slippery substance that is used with condoms to reduce friction during sex.

## **PEP**

Post-exposure prophylaxis is treatment taken by an HIV negative person within 72 hours after an event of potential HIV risk in order to prevent HIV infection.

## **PrEP**

Pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP is when a HIV negative person takes HIV medications every day to protect them from HIV.

## **Rapid HIV test**

A small drop of blood from your finger is used to test for HIV. A result is ready in 30 minutes.

## **Recreational drugs**

These are drugs that are not prescribed by a doctor and are used for pleasure. All recreational drugs are illegal in Australia.

## **Section 100 (s100) Highly Specialised Drugs**

Highly Specialised Drugs are medicines used to treat and prevent HIV, which can only be prescribed by doctors who are specially trained.

## **S100 Prescriber**

A doctor who has been trained to prescribe Section 100 (s100) Highly Specialised Drugs, including medicines that are used to treat and prevent HIV.

## **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

Infections spread through sexual contact. They are caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites.

## **Seroconversion**

The time it takes for HIV antibodies to be detectable in the blood after infection. This is sometimes called the 'window period'.

## **Side effect**

A possible negative reaction to medication or treatment.

## **Stigma**

Negative beliefs, feelings and views that a society or group of people have towards someone because of their gender, sexuality, race, colour, health problems or religious beliefs.

## **TasP**

Treatment as Prevention or TasP involves taking HIV medication as ordered by your doctor to make you viral load undetectable.

## **Transmission**

The passing of a disease from one person to another.

## **Treatment**

Something that a person does so that they can stay healthy or get better. Treatments can involve taking medicine, complementary therapies and/or changes in lifestyle.

# TERMS YOU MAY HEAR WHEN TALKING ABOUT HIV

## **Undetectable viral load (UVL)**

An undetectable viral load means that HIV is still in your body but in very small amounts. This is the main goal of HIV treatment as it means the immune system is not being attacked and that a person cannot pass HIV to sexual partners.

## **Vending machine**

A vending machine is a machine where you can get things such as chocolate, coffee or condoms by putting in money and pressing a button. Vending machines with condoms are usually found in the toilets of some places, such as pubs or universities.

## **Viral load**

A term used to describe the amount of HIV in your blood. The higher the viral load, the higher the chance of passing on HIV, and the quicker HIV can weaken your immune system.

## **Virus**

A germ that some antibiotics cannot treat. HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C are viruses that cannot be treated by antibiotics. They can all be treated by antiviral medications.

## **Window period**

See 'seroconversion'.

