

TAKING CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

As you get older, your immune system becomes weaker. This can result in age-related health problems known as non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and other health conditions.

Managing HIV and your health as you get older means you should:

- Monitor your cholesterol, blood pressure and sugar levels, these are common problems for all older people.
- Talk to your healthcare worker about any new symptoms and get checked for new illnesses.
- Tell your healthcare worker about all your medication and any supplements you use.
- Always take your ARVs and any other medication you may have as prescribed by your healthcare worker.
- Make sure you know the name of your ARVs and any other medication you take and its dose strength – these are written on the package or bottle.
- Talk to your healthcare worker to make sure that it is safe to take your ARVs with other medicines. Some medicines may not mix well with ARVs and may reduce their effectiveness.

STAYING POSITIVE AS YOU GET OLDER

If you are getting older and living with HIV, you should:

- Be aware that people will see you as an older person first, before they know your HIV status.
- Be proud of who you are and your achievements in life.
- Find ways to contribute to the wellbeing of your family and community.
- Find ways to keep connected with other people to avoid loneliness.
- Exercise your brain by learning new things.
- Stay active by doing physical activities that you enjoy.
- Join a support group of others who understand what you are experiencing.
- Educate others about HIV and help to change the way they see HIV.

The 'Zenzele Living with HIV' publication range includes the following brochures:

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
|  | 1 TREATMENT |  |
|  | 2 DISCLOSURE |  |
|  | 3 ADHERENCE |  |
|  | 4 PMTCT |  |
|  | 5 LOVE AND SEX |  |
|  | 6 NUTRITION AND LIFESTYLE |  |
|  | 7 ADOLESCENTS AND HIV |  |
|  | 8 AGEING WITH HIV |  |

FINDING HELP AND SUPPORT

If you are living with HIV, you are not alone. You can get the help and support you need when you ask for it. Many organisations offer free calls to experienced counsellors who are available 24 hours a day.

AIDS Helpline **0800 012 322**
 Gender-based Violence Command Centre **0800 428 428**
 Lifeline Counselling Line **0861 322 322**
 Suicide Crisis Line **0800 567 567**
 Childline (under 17) **0800 055 555**
 Substance Abuse Line **0800 12 13 14**
 Momconnect ***134*550#**

If you are looking for HIV support services in any part of South Africa, visit www.healthsites.org.za or dial *120*662# to find a support group in your area.

To find a Facebook support group, visit BrothersforlifeSA or ZAZI. You can also visit www.brothersforlife.mobi or www.zazi.org.za

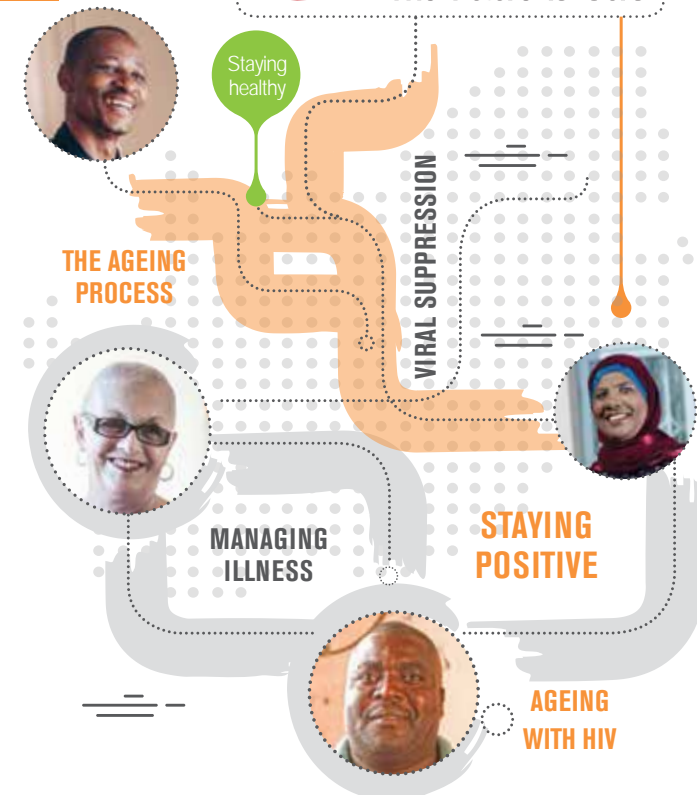
You can find more information on living with HIV in other brochures in the Zenzele series.



AGEING WITH HIV

Adhere to ARVs

8 LIVING WITH HIV: GROWING OLDER



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ATTACKS CD4 CELLS



HIV IN THE BODY

HIV is a virus that weakens the immune system, which protects your body against infection and disease. When your immune system is weak, your body cannot fight infections and diseases. If HIV is not treated with ARVs, you can get a collection of diseases called Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

IMMUNE SYSTEM IS WEAKENED



GETTING TREATMENT FOR HIV

Antiretroviral treatment (ARVs) are medications that are the only way to control HIV. Adherence – taking ARVs as told by a healthcare worker - reduces the amount of HIV in the body: the CD4 count goes up and the immune system recovers. This is called *viral suppression*. This does not mean HIV has been cured, it means there is only a small amount of HIV in the blood, that you will enjoy better health, and that there is less chance of transmitting HIV to somebody else.

VIRAL SUPPRESSION



HIV AND THE AGEING PROCESS

Taking your ARVs correctly will keep your viral load suppressed and your immune system strong. It is also important to stay healthy and motivated as you get older with HIV.



“I still have a lot to do. I want to show people that it doesn't matter how old you are, you can survive with HIV. Having the right mindset and taking your medication can help you do it.”

Cindy Pivacic



LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS OF ARVs

Taking ARVs for many years can have long-term side effects. These differ from person to person, and some people may not experience any long-term effects.

Talk to your healthcare worker about any new symptoms so that they can help you manage them. They may give you new medication to treat these side effects and may change your ARV regimen.

Some side effects can be managed through medication and/or through lifestyle changes.

| COMMON LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS OF ARVs | THINGS YOU CAN DO TO STAY HEALTHY |
|--|--|
| Diabetes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to keep your weight down. • Eat a healthier diet. • Stay active. • Stop smoking. |
| Weakening of the bones (osteoporosis) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do weight-bearing exercise like walking, jogging or climbing stairs. • Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. • Increase calcium and vitamins D and K. • Be careful not to fall. • Reduce stress. • Get more sleep. |
| Kidney problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get regular kidney function tests. • Drink plenty of water. • Cut down on salt. • Eat a healthier diet. |
| Heart disease | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat a healthier diet. • Stay active. • Stop smoking. • Reduce stress. |
| Liver damage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get regular liver function tests. • Avoid alcohol and drugs. |
| High cholesterol | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose foods low in trans fats. • Eat more fiber-rich foods. • Reduce alcohol. • Stay active. |
| Changes in how the body uses and stores fat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat a healthier diet. • Stay active. |
| Nervous system problems (sleeping problems, depression, and dizziness) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get more sleep. • Cut down on alcohol. • Exercise your brain by playing memory games, word games and writing by hand. |