

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 TRANSMISSION AND SEX

HIV is in body fluids such as:

- Blood;
- Semen;
- Pre-ejaculate (pre-cum) and;
- Vaginal fluids

The most common way that HIV is transmitted from one person to another is through sexual contact, where these fluids come into contact with the soft internal tissues of the vagina or anus.

If you are taking ARVs and are virally suppressed, the chances of you transmitting HIV to your partner during sex are greatly reduced. But for greater protection, it is best to always use a condom.



“We have a slogan that says: ‘Love beyond HIV and AIDS’. When you are shown such unconditional love by another human being, it is absolutely wonderful... it not only elevates you to a different place, it shows you that HIV is really nothing.”

Dorian Basson



ENJOYING A HEALTHY SEX LIFE

When you are first diagnosed with HIV, you may lose interest in relationships and sex while you come to terms with your diagnosis and work on improving your health, but many people want to enjoy sex and a relationship again in time.

The best way to enjoy sex is to:

- Take your ARVs correctly every day and make sure that you stay virally suppressed.
- Use a condom correctly and consistently when you have sex.
- Use a dental dam or a cut-open condom during oral sex.
- Use a water or silicone-based lubricant during sex.
- Talk openly with your partner about sex and having safer sex.

USING LUBRICANTS

A lubricant is a liquid or gel applied during sex to make the vagina, penis or anal area moist.

Lubricants can:

- Reduce friction and prevent condoms breaking;
- Increase sexual comfort and pleasure;
- Allow men to have an erection for longer; and
- Allow women to enjoy sex for longer.

Water and silicone-based lubricants like KY jelly and glycerine **are safe to use with condoms**, feel natural and are easy to wash off.

Oil and petroleum-based lubricants like Vaseline, baby oil, cooking oils or body lotions **are not safe to use with condoms** because they damage condoms.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

If a condom breaks during sex, you should:

- Withdraw the penis immediately and use a new condom.
- Get emergency contraception (morning-after pill) if you are not using other contraceptive methods.
- Make sure that you and your partner get tested for HIV.
- Access emergency HIV treatment (PEP) to prevent HIV infection.

PEP is a 28-day course of ARVs that can prevent HIV infection in an HIV-negative person. PEP must be taken within 72 hours (3 days) of being exposed to HIV and is more effective if taken as soon as possible.

You can ask for PEP at any clinic or hospital.

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