

HIV AIDS

It might be frightening to learn that you or a loved one, has HIV. There is so much false information available.

Come in to our practice and talk to one of our medical doctors if you have any concerns or questions about this condition. We maintain the strictest confidentiality with regard to our patients.

Facts & Myths

It's a terrifying subject, AIDS. Many people find it simpler to avoid testing since it causes them so much anxiety.

It need not be a death sentence. Many of our HIV-positive patients at Dr Greeff & Associates live healthy, fulfilling, happy lives. We offer our patients the appropriate nutritional advice they need, as well as any essential medicines.

Come in for a quick test with one of our Medical Doctors if you have any concerns about your status.

What is HIV?

A virus called the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) attacks the immune system, which normally protects the body against infections.

What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. It is the final stage of infection with HIV. It happens when the body's immune system is badly damaged because of the virus. Not everyone with HIV develops AIDS.

The most common ways to catch HIV?

- Having unprotected sex with someone who is infected
- Sharing a needle with an HIV-positive person
- Through contact with the blood of a person with HIV
- An HIV-positive mother giving birth to a child
- A baby drinking the breast milk of an HIV-positive mother

What are the symptoms of HIV/AIDS?

The **first** symptoms of this infection may be flu-like:

- Chills
- Fever
- Rash
- Mouth ulcers
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Swollen lymph nodes

Between two and four weeks may pass before these symptoms reappear. This stage is called acute HIV infection.

The HIV infection can become chronic if it is not treated. There are often no symptoms at this point. The infection will gradually weaken your immune system if it is not treated. The infection will then develop into AIDS.

Why should you get tested?

- **Reduces anxiety** - You'll have peace of mind if you take an HIV test and the results are negative. If the results are positive, you will be equipped with the information you need to take good care of your health.
- **It's easier than ever** -it only requires a quick blood test; it's almost painless, fast, and is extremely reliable.
- **For your sexual partners** - No matter whether you are having sexual intercourse with one or several partners, knowing your status enables you to prevent the spread of the virus. Let other people know as to whether they also need to get tested.
- **Early treatment is always best** - The sooner you learn, the less damage the virus can cause and the better your long-term health will be. One of the main factors contributing to the long, healthy lives of persons with HIV today is early diagnosis and treatment. According to studies, an HIV-positive individual in their 20s who begins treatment today may expect to live to be 78 years old, and that figure is only going to rise.

KNOW YOUR STATUS!

More than 7.8 million people are living with HIV and Aids in South Africa.

What are CD4 cells?

These cells, also known as "T-helper" cells, play a significant role in every healthy person's immune system.

A ml of blood from a healthy person has 500 to 1500 CD4 cells.

When a person with HIV's CD4 count drops below 200, HIV develops into Aids.

About ARVs

The main type of HIV and Aids treatment is antiretroviral medication therapy (ARVs). Although there is no cure for HIV or AIDS, these medications can help people live longer and improve your quality of life.

When does treatment start?

This is decided jointly by the patient and the doctor during the consultation and is typically based on both the blood test results and the readiness of the patient to start the lifelong treatment.

The side effects of the treatment?

The majority of antiretroviral medications have side effects; some are mild, while others are more serious. It is essential that patients continue receiving therapy since every dosage missed raises the likelihood that the medication will stop being effective.

Can HIV be transmitted to a baby?

In the case where a pregnant woman has HIV, she can infect her unborn child while she is pregnant, while giving birth, or while nursing, if her viral load is not suppressed. However, the transmission of HIV from mother to child can be stopped with the help of modern medications. Your doctor at Doctor Greeff & Associates will provide you with advice on which ARVs are most appropriate for your situation. All women are encouraged to breastfeed, because of the many health benefits to both you and your baby. Breastfed babies, including those of mothers who are HIV positive, have reduced chest infections and diarrhoea, lower risks of obesity and diabetes, and lower risks of allergies. Moms who breastfeed have a lower risk of breast cancer, high blood pressure and diabetes, and postpartum depression.

How do I protect my partner from HIV?

There is a very low risk of transmission if your viral load is suppressed. Your partner can further protect themselves by using condoms and taking HIV-prevention medication called PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis). By taking this tablet every day, they will protect themselves from acquiring HIV. Speak to your doctor if you and your partner would like to discuss PrEP!

Important pointers for managing and preventing HIV, in a nutshell:

- Always use a condom.
- Have your partner and yourself tested, especially at the beginning of a new relationship.
- If you do test positive for HIV, work closely with your Medical Doctor to maintain good health.
- Never skip an ARV dosage because doing so might cause the drug to stop working.

Vital Facts

- There is no cure
- You cannot catch Aids from mosquitoes
- HIV-positive people cannot be detected by their appearance
- Aids is not restricted to gay men