

KNOW YOUR HIV STATUS (Questions and Answers)

All people who are sexually active and do not know their HIV status are encouraged to make use of HIV Testing and Counselling Services.

Why Get Tested?

HIV Testing and Counselling Services:

- Help people to know their HIV status, which helps prevent the spread of HIV.
- HIV Testing and Counselling acts as an entry point to treatment and care.
- HIV Testing and Counselling is **confidential**, which means that no one will know a person's test results unless you give your permission.

Is there any hope for People Living With HIV and AIDS (PLWHA)?

YES! Advances in science and increased knowledge make HIV and AIDS what is now called a chronic manageable condition like diabetes or high blood pressure. While there is no known cure for HIV and AIDS (yet), there are many things that PLWHA can do to live a long and healthy life. Anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs are special drugs that have been created to treat HIV and help PLWHA stay healthy.

What is positive prevention?

Positive prevention aims to increase the self-esteem and confidence of HIV positive individuals to protect their own health and avoid passing the infection onto others. Through good nutrition, prevention of other infections taking medications consistently and properly and taking positive action for their health and future (positive living), PLWHA can live healthy and productive lives and prevent the transmission of HIV to others.

What are HIV and AIDS?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It attacks the immune system – the body's defence against disease. HIV lives in blood, breast milk, semen and vaginal fluids. **AIDS** is the name given to a group of serious illnesses in HIV positive people. These are illnesses that arise when PLWHA are no longer able to fight off infection because of lowered immunity.

Acronym:

Acquired: Means a disease you get during life rather than one you are born with.

Immune Deficiency means a weakness in the body's immune system,

Syndrome means a group of particular health problems that make up a disease

How is HIV Transmitted?

HIV can be transmitted in 3 main ways:

1. Unprotected Sexual Contact –having unprotected sex is the most common way that people contract HIV
2. Blood Contact - through blood transfusion, sharing needles or other sharp objects contaminated with blood
- 3 .Mother-to-Child Transmission – mothers can pass HIV to their babies through pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding

Ways in which HIV is NOT Transmitted

Through social contact such as...

- Hugging
- Kissing
- Shaking hands
- Breathing the same air, coughs, sneezes
- Sweat, contact through sport
- Tears, consoling someone who is crying
- Through sharing things such as...
 - Toilet seats
 - Food utensils or drinking cups
 - Clothes
- Public baths or swimming pools
- Through insect bites such as...
 - Mosquito bites
 - Bed bugs

Methods of Preventing HIV Transmission

1. Having safer sex (the correct use of condoms every time, abstinence, being faithful to your partner, avoiding casual sex

or having non-penetrative sex) Do you know how to properly use a condom?

If not...ask a local health professional.

2. Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) involves methods that help prevent a mother from passing HIV to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breast feeding.

If you are pregnant, planning to have children, or sexually active, it is very important to learn your HIV status.

3. Harm Reduction means preventing or reducing the health consequences of behaviours. This includes helping people whose behaviours might put them at risk to HIV.

4. Precautions Against Infection often called 'Universal Precautions' means taking steps to ensure no contact with blood or body fluids during caring activities. For example, cover all open wounds, dispose of waste properly and do not share sharp objects such as needles.

How do I know if I am HIV positive?

The only way to know your HIV status for sure is through taking tests.