

# HIV Inclusive

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## 1. What is HIV?

**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV):** Attacks the immune system, specifically CD4 cells (T-cells), weakening the body's ability to fight infections.

**AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome):** The final stage of untreated HIV, marked by severe immune damage and opportunistic infections.

## 2. Transmission

### How it spreads:

- Unprotected sex (vaginal, anal, oral)
- Sharing needles/syringes
- Mother-to-child (pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding)
- Blood transfusions/organ transplants (rare in screened systems)

### How it DOESN'T spread:

- Casual contact (hugging, kissing, sharing food)
- Mosquito bites

## 3. Symptoms

### Early (Acute HIV):

Fever, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes, rash (2–4 weeks post-exposure).

### Chronic HIV:

Asymptomatic for years, but the virus damages the immune system.

## AIDS:

Rapid weight loss, recurring infections (e.g., TB, pneumonia), cancers (e.g., Kaposi's sarcoma).

## 4. Testing & Diagnosis

### Tests:

- Rapid antibody tests (finger prick/oral fluid)
- PCR/RNA tests (detect virus early, 10–14 days post-exposure)
- CD4 count/viral load tests (monitor progression)

**Window period:** 10–90 days (depends on test type).

## 5. Treatment (ART)

**Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):** Daily medications suppress HIV, allowing near-normal life expectancy.

- **Key drugs:** Integrase inhibitors, protease inhibitors, NRTIs, NNRTIs
- **U=U:** Undetectable viral load = Untransmittable (cannot spread HIV sexually)

### PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis):

Emergency meds within 72 hours of exposure.

### PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis):

Daily pill (e.g., Truvada) to prevent HIV in high-risk groups.

## 6. Prevention

- Use condoms/dental dams
- Never share needles
- Regular testing (especially for high-risk groups)
- Circumcision (reduces heterosexual male risk by ~60%)
- Mother-to-child prevention: ART during pregnancy

## 7. Living with HIV

- **Adherence:** Taking ART consistently is critical
- **Stigma:** Fight misinformation; HIV is not a moral failing
- **Support:** Join patient advocacy groups

## 8. Myths vs. Facts

**Myth:** HIV only affects gay men.

**Fact:** Anyone can contract HIV (all genders, sexualities).

**Myth:** HIV is a death sentence.

**Fact:** With ART, people live long, healthy lives.

## Support & Contacts

### HIV Inclusive App

HIV Inclusive : \*6345#:

NMC : 061 287 6000:

MetHealth: 061 287 6000:

MyHealth: 061 375 950: