

Understanding HIV: Testing, Prevention, and Treatment

What is HIV?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, specifically the CD4 cells (T cells), which help the body fight infections. Without treatment, HIV can weaken the immune system and progress to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome).

Testing for HIV

Why Testing Matters

Early detection allows for prompt treatment and care. Reduces the risk of unknowingly transmitting HIV. Gives peace of mind and helps protect your community.

Types of HIV Tests

Rapid Tests: Provide results in about 20 minutes using a finger prick or oral swab. Laboratory Tests: Involve a blood draw and can detect HIV sooner after exposure.

Where to Get Tested

Local clinics and hospitals, community health centers, mobile testing units, and pharmacies with rapid test kits. Testing is confidential and often free or low-cost.

HIV Prevention

HIV can be prevented through a combination of safe practices and preventive medicine.

- Use condoms correctly and consistently.
- Get tested regularly with your partner.
- Avoid sharing needles.
- Consider PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis).
- Ensure blood transfusions are from screened sources.

Treatment: ART (Antiretroviral Therapy)

Benefits of ART

Reduces viral load to undetectable levels. Strengthens the immune system. Prevents transmission (U=U). Allows people living with HIV to live long, healthy lives.

Adherence is Key

Take medication as prescribed. Do not skip doses. Stay in contact with your healthcare provider. Join support groups for encouragement.

Living Positively with HIV

Being HIV-positive is not the end — it ' s the start of a new chapter with care, knowledge, and support.

- Maintain a healthy diet and exercise.
- Prioritize mental health.
- Stay connected with support groups.
- Keep regular medical appointments.

Where to Get Help

If you need confidential support or testing information, contact:

- National HIV Helpline: 0800-012-322
- Local Health Centers
- Community Support Groups

All services are confidential, judgment-free, and available to everyone.

Knowledge saves lives. Get tested. Get treated. Stay healthy.

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