

**2024**  
**HIV MEMBER**  
**BROCHURE**



# What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

## What is HIV?

Human immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. There is no cure for HIV at the moment. However, it can be managed through prevention, early diagnosis, and treatment and care.

If HIV is not treated, it can turn into to AIDS.

## What is AIDS?

When HIV is not properly treated, it can develop into acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). AIDS is the final stage of HIV.

## Signs and symptoms of HIV and AIDS

To find out if you are HIV positive, you must go for an HIV test by a qualified healthcare professional.

The signs and symptoms of HIV differ depending on the stage of infection.

After few weeks of being infected, you can experience the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Rash
- Sore throat

As the infection weakens your immune systems, you can have the following signs and symptoms:

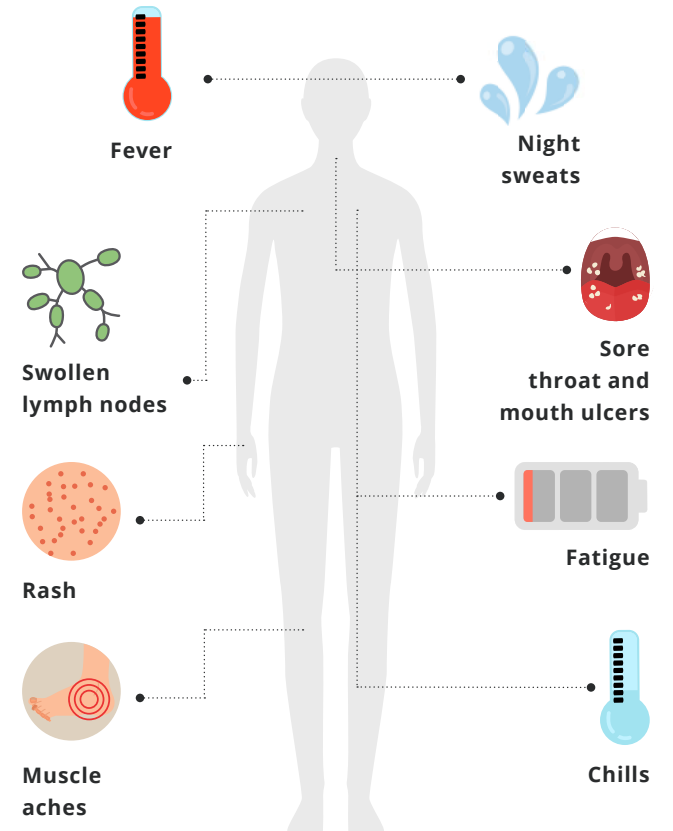
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Cough

## Why is testing for HIV important?

Testing for HIV is very important as it allows you to know your HIV status and protect the people around you against the virus.

The sooner you get tested, the better. If you test positive for HIV your doctor can start treating you so you can live a long and healthy life.

You can have an HIV test at any time and at any healthcare facility that offers this service. You can ask your doctor or pharmacy clinic about the test or request the test when you do your annual health check.



# A well-managed chronic condition means a good and healthy life

## Five key pillars to make your HIV journey a success

01 

### Protect your family and your partner against HIV and AIDS

If you test positive for HIV, you can protect your family and loved ones by doing the following:

- Do not share used or unsterilized needles.
- Use condoms every time you have sex.
- Take your HIV medicines as prescribed by your doctor.
- If your partner is not on treatment, advise them to speak to their doctor about taking PrEP.

02 

### See your primary care doctor regularly

Having a doctor who you trust and see regularly will help ensure that your condition is well managed. Your doctor will discuss your medicine and blood test results with you. You should also ask your doctor any questions you may have about your chronic condition.

It is important to select your primary care GP and share this information with us to avoid co-payments. Nominate your primary care GP by using this link and following the instructions provided.

[Nominate your primary care provider by using this link;](#) and follow the instructions.

03 

### Take your medication

Taking your medicine as prescribed by your doctor will help you live a long and healthy life.

Here are some of the benefits of taking your HIV medicine as prescribed by your doctor:

- Your viral load will be suppressed, meaning your body has very low levels of the virus (less than 200 copies of HIV per milliliter of blood).
- Your CD4 count will increase which means that your immune system is getting stronger.
- The virus will grow slower. If you skip your doses or do not stick to your medicine routine, you will give the virus a chance to grow quicker, meaning you may get sick or infect your loved ones.

04 

### Go for a viral load test regularly

Viral load means the amount of virus that the infected person has in their blood. A low viral load shows that an HIV treatment is working, while a high viral load shows that you are not taking your HIV medicine as you should, or the virus is becoming resistant to the medicine.

It is important to keep going for viral load testing, as this can help your doctor to identify any potential issues early on. If a viral load test shows that your body is not responding well to the medicine, your doctor can immediately change your treatment.

You need to go for viral load testing at least twice a year.

05 

### Live a healthy lifestyle

Living a healthy lifestyle is very important as it can help you prevent other chronic diseases and long-term illness.

How to improve your lifestyle:

- Eating a well balanced diet can strengthen your immune system and help you maintain a healthy weight.
- Regular exercise can help you lower your risk of developing other chronic conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

# The HIV Care Programme and Premier Plus GPs

## How to get enrolled on the HIV Care Programme

If your GP is on the Premier Plus network, they can enrol you on the HIV Care Programme provided you have given them consent to do so.

The programme has been developed, using clinical and lifestyle guidelines to give members access to care and support. This includes unlocking additional benefits. Members enrolled on the HIV Care Programme have access to a long consultation with their enrolling GP and a social worker consultation each year, paid from Scheme benefits.

When you visit your enrolling Premier Plus GP it is important to agree on key goals. Your GP can track this on a personalised dashboard on your electronic health record on Health ID.

To find a Premier Plus GP visit [www.discovery.co.za](http://www.discovery.co.za) > **Find a healthcare provider** or click **Find a healthcare provider on the Discovery Health app.**



# Reach out to Discovery Health

If have any questions or concerns, you can speak to your Primary Care GP or reach out to Discovery Care Team.



[HIV\\_Diseasemanagement@discovery.co.za](mailto:HIV_Diseasemanagement@discovery.co.za)



0860 99 8877

Download the Discovery Health app



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