

# 10

things  
it's  
good  
to  
know  
about  
HIV

**HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).**

**AIDS is a collection of specific illnesses and conditions which occur because the body's immune system has been damaged by HIV.**

**1** Having a test to find out if you have HIV could save your life.

If you're HIV-positive, the sooner you find out, the sooner you can receive medical care. Every year in the UK 200 people die because they found out they were HIV-positive so late that treatment couldn't work. HIV tests are free to everyone via the National Health Service (NHS).

**2** HIV testing and treatment is confidential.

Your HIV clinic won't tell anybody that you have HIV without your permission.

**3** The best HIV care will be at a specialist NHS HIV clinic.

HIV doctors at specialist clinics will regularly check your health to see how HIV is affecting your immune system and explain what treatment you need to take.

**4** Taking HIV treatment can mean a longer, healthier life.

Even though there's no cure for HIV, doctors are now hopeful that you can live a more or less normal lifespan if you take a combination of anti-HIV drugs.

**5** You need to take all your anti-HIV drugs as instructed.

If you don't, there's a risk that the drugs you are currently taking, and any similar drugs, won't work.

**6** HIV treatment is there to protect and improve your health.

However anti-HIV drugs can cause side-effects. Make sure you tell your doctor, as there's a good chance you'll be able to do something about them.

**7** HIV treatment is free.

If you are entitled to free NHS care, then all your HIV treatment and care will be free. If you are not entitled to free NHS care you may have to pay for your treatment and care.

**8** You may still be able to pass on HIV to somebody else even if you are taking anti-HIV treatment.

Condoms effectively prevent the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Clean needles and syringes are available if you inject drugs - never share needles or other injecting equipment.

**9** Mother to baby transmission of HIV can be prevented in nearly all cases.

The use of anti-HIV treatment, having a caesarean delivery, and not breastfeeding can reduce the risk of a mother passing on HIV to her baby to less than 1%.

**10** There's a lot you can do to look after your own health.

You can help yourself by eating well, reducing stress, not smoking, and exercising. Make sure you get good quality, impartial information about HIV to help you make good decisions regarding your health and treatment.

## further information

NAM are a UK-based charity providing information on HIV. Please contact us for further information or if you would like to receive any of the publications listed.

**NAM**

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[www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com)

[info@nam.org.uk](mailto:info@nam.org.uk)

Free factsheets, information booklets, monthly newsletter, monthly information events in London, and an HIV information website with the latest treatments news and a comprehensive database of symptoms, illnesses and HIV treatments.

