

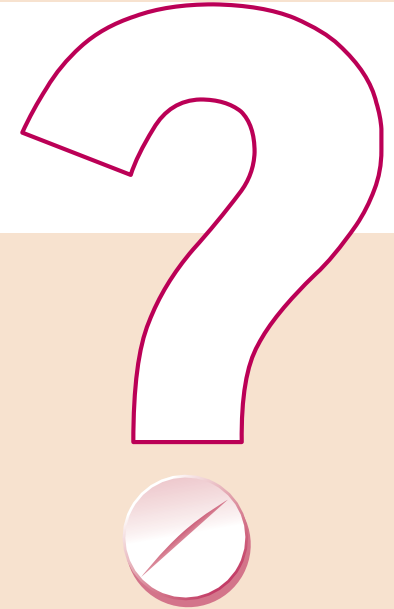
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NHS Pan-London HIV Prevention Programme and NHS South West Essex

# The basics

## When should I start treatment?



This leaflet can be viewed in large format as a PDF.  
Call NAM on 020 3242 0820.



This organisation has been certified as a producer of reliable health and social care information.  
[www.theinformationstandard.org](http://www.theinformationstandard.org)



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### Notes

Starting HIV treatment is recommended for everyone who has a CD4 count below 350 and who feels ready to start. Your doctor or another health-care worker will be able to answer any questions you have about HIV treatment and help you work out whether you're ready to start.

Sometimes people start treatment when the CD4 count is above 350. Your doctor may recommend this:

- if you have an HIV-related illness
- if you have hepatitis
- if you need treatment for cancer
- if you are older (for example, over 50), or
- to reduce the risk of passing HIV on.

### Want to find out more?

#### For more information on this topic:

- read NAM's fact sheet 'Starting HIV treatment'
- read NAM's booklet 'HIV therapy'
- read Terrence Higgins Trust's booklet 'Your treatment', or
- speak to an adviser at THT Direct (phone: 0808 802 1221).

#### For more information about HIV

You can get free fact sheets, booklets, email bulletins and a newsletter from our website at [www.aidsmap.com/resources](http://www.aidsmap.com/resources). You can get answers to common questions at [www.aidsmap.com/hiv-basics](http://www.aidsmap.com/hiv-basics) and find local services at [www.aidsmap.com/e-atlas](http://www.aidsmap.com/e-atlas).

**Contact us** by calling 020 3242 0820 or by sending an email to [info@nam.org.uk](mailto:info@nam.org.uk)

#### Has this resource been useful to you?

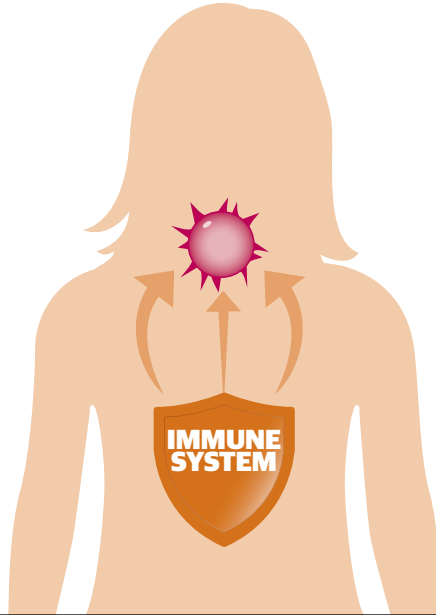
Please let us know what you think by visiting our website at [www.aidsmap.com/feedback](http://www.aidsmap.com/feedback), phoning us or sending an email to [info@nam.org.uk](mailto:info@nam.org.uk). Your feedback helps us to improve the services we offer you.

You can contact us to find out more about the scientific research and information we have used to produce this leaflet.

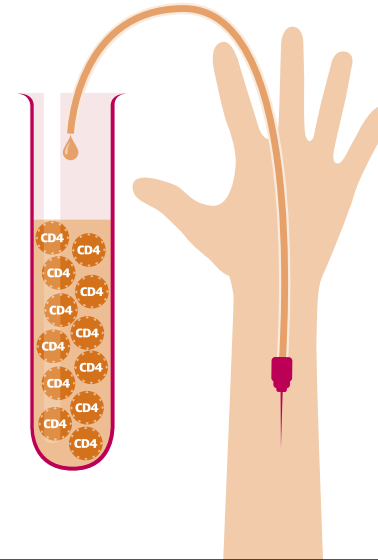
**We recommend that you discuss the information in this leaflet with a doctor or other health worker.**

**You may not need to take HIV treatment straight away. It depends on the effect HIV has had on your immune system.**

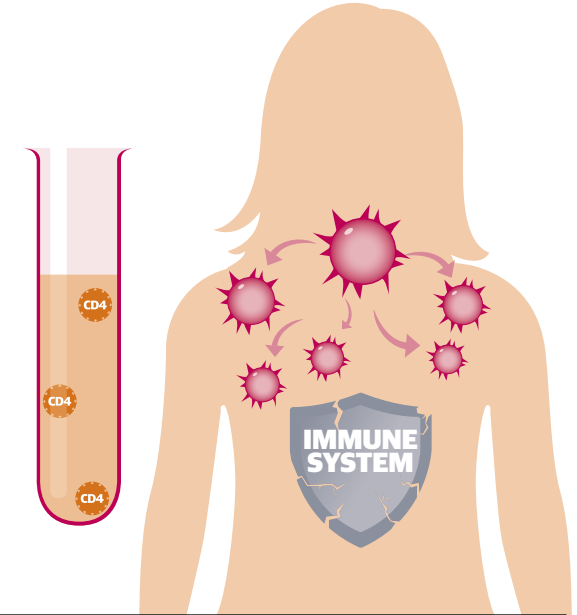
**1** The immune system is the body's natural defence system. When it is strong, it can fight off infections and illnesses on its own.



**2** The CD4 count is a blood test that gives information about your immune system. A high CD4 count means your immune system is strong.

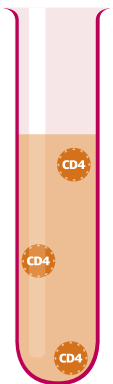


**3** If your CD4 count is low, this means HIV has weakened your immune system.



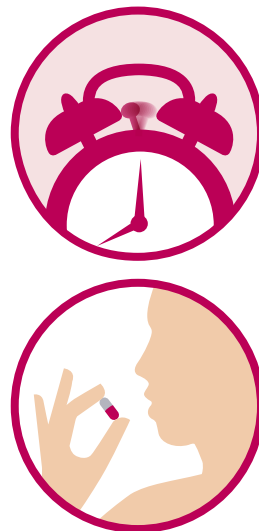
**4** If your CD4 count goes below 350, starting treatment is recommended.

**Below 350**

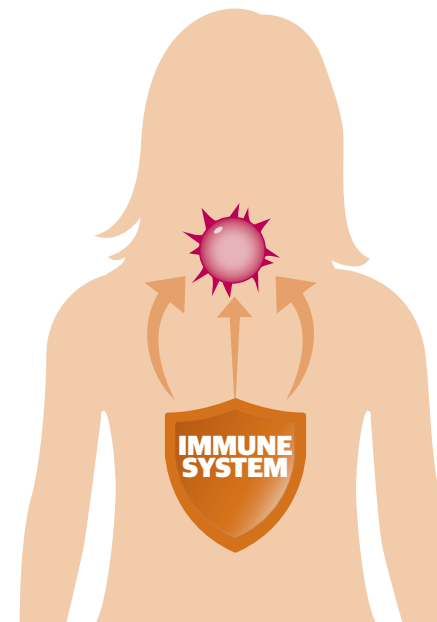


Sometimes, it's recommended to start treatment earlier, even if your CD4 count is above 350. See the 'notes' section for more information.

**5** HIV treatment involves taking pills at the same time every single day. You need to feel ready for this commitment.



**6** HIV treatment will strengthen your immune system. It will be able to fight off infections and illnesses again.



## Important points

- **British medical guidelines recommend starting treatment when the CD4 count goes below 350.**
- **Taking treatment will prevent further damage to your immune system, and will mean there is less risk of getting ill in the future.**