

# The basics

## Very recent infection

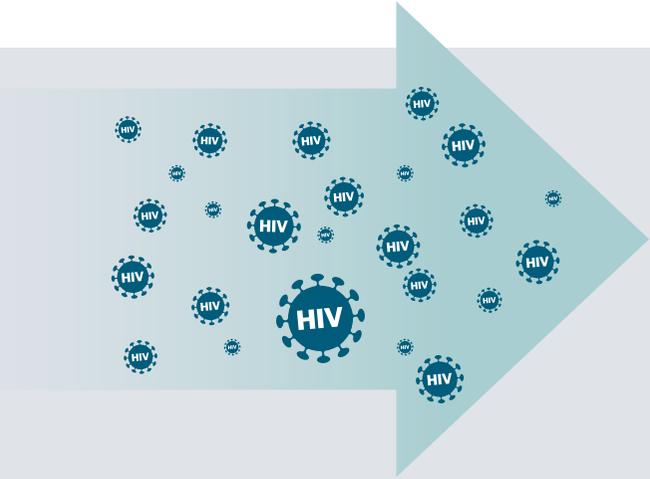
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**With thanks to the HIV professionals and people who have provided feedback that shaped this resource: Rob, Martin, Colin, Positive Health (Lincolnshire), Justin Dickson and service users at Terrence Higgins Trust, Dr Sarah Fidler and colleagues at SPARTAC.**

Thanks to SPARTAC for their support in developing this leaflet. To find out more about the SPARTAC clinical trial, please visit the SPARTAC website at: [www.imperial.ac.uk/medicine/spartac](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/medicine/spartac)



This leaflet can be viewed in large format as a PDF.  
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### Notes

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### Want to find out more?

**For more information on this topic:**

- read our 'Better off knowing', 'CD4 and viral load' and 'Transmission and viral load' leaflets;
- read our 'Primary infection' fact sheet; 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?**

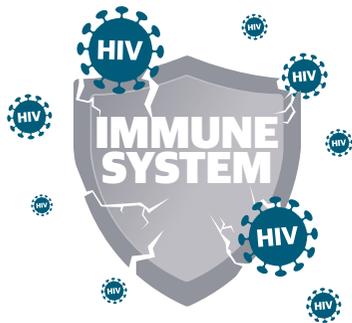
Please let us know what you think by visiting our website at [www.aidsmap.com/feedback](http://www.aidsmap.com/feedback), phoning us or sending an email to [info@nam.org.uk](mailto:info@nam.org.uk). Your feedback helps us to improve the services we offer you.

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

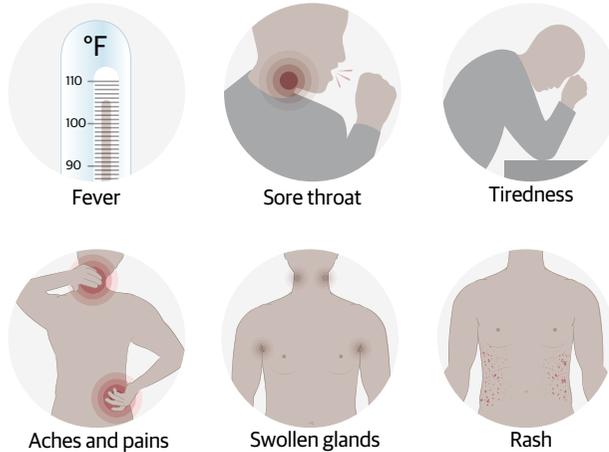
**We recommend that you discuss the information in this leaflet with a doctor or other health worker.**

# During the first few weeks after becoming infected with HIV, your body's immune system is working out what HIV is and how to get it under control.

**1** Your immune system defends your body against infections. But when you are first infected with HIV, your immune system is weakened. Your CD4 count tells you how strong your immune system is.



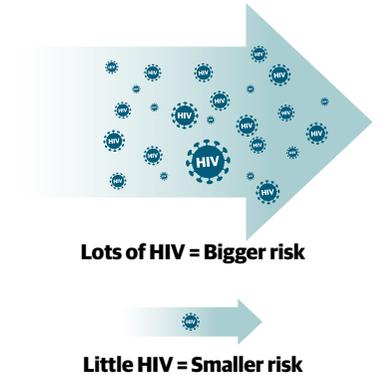
**2** You may feel unwell for a short time. This is called seroconversion illness.



**3** HIV spreads quickly throughout your body. For the first few months, the amount of HIV in the body is very high. This is measured by a viral load test.



**4** When you have a lot of HIV in your body (that is, have a high viral load), there is more risk of passing on HIV than at other times. Safer sex is especially important now.



**5** In a few months, your immune system will be better at keeping HIV under control. You will feel better, there will be less HIV in your body and your CD4 count will probably go up.



**6** Your doctor may recommend starting HIV treatment if:

- your CD4 count is below 350;
- you have severe symptoms;
- you became infected in the last three months; or
- you want to reduce your risk of passing HIV on.



**7** Otherwise you probably don't need to take treatment now.



## Important points

● In the first few weeks after becoming infected with HIV, your immune system does not know how to fight HIV and so the virus can quickly multiply.

● You may feel ill, but this does not usually last long.

● Not everybody needs to take HIV treatment straightaway.