

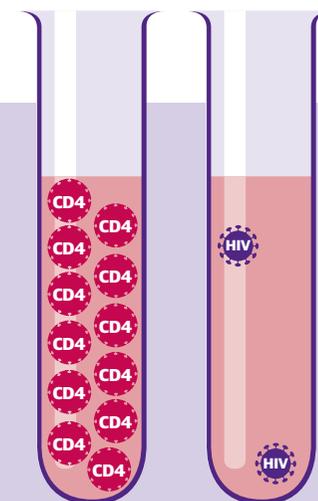
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**Thanks to all of the professionals and people with HIV who have helped with the development of this resource.**

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

# The basics

## CD4 and viral load



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)



Crystal Mark  
17981

Clarity approved by  
Plain English Campaign

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## Notes

### Quick guide to test results

#### CD4 counts

- Between 500 and 1200 = usual for people who don't have HIV
- Above 350 = HIV treatment **isn't** usually recommended
- Below 350 = HIV treatment **is** recommended
- Below 200 = there is a higher risk of illnesses and infections, so HIV treatment is recommended

#### Your doctor may give your CD4 results as a percentage

- Above 29% = similar to a CD4 count of above 500
- Below 14% = similar to a CD4 count of below 200

#### Viral load

- Between 100,000 and 1 million = high
- Below 10,000 = for people with HIV not on treatment, this is low
- Below 50 = known as an 'undetectable' viral load. The aim of HIV treatment is to have an undetectable viral load.

## Want to find out more?

### For more information on this topic:

- read NAM's fact sheets 'CD4 cell counts' and 'Viral load'
- read NAM's leaflet in this series 'Undetectable viral load'
- 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.**

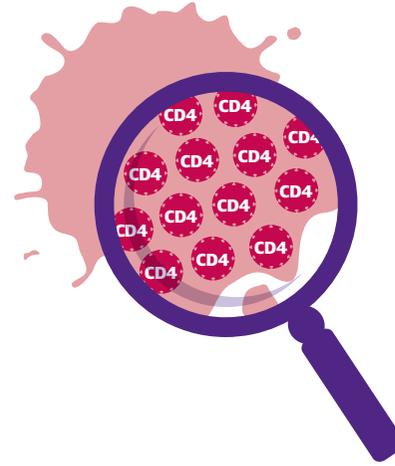
**It's important for all people with HIV to take regular blood tests.**

**The two most important blood tests are for CD4 and viral load.**

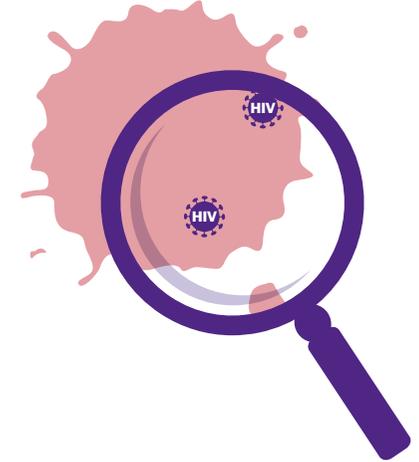
- 1** CD4 cells are the most important cells in the immune system. Our immune system protects us against infections and illness.



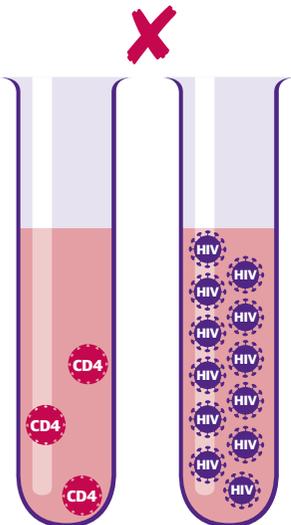
- 2** The CD4 count tells you how many CD4 cells there are in a drop of blood. The more there are, the better.



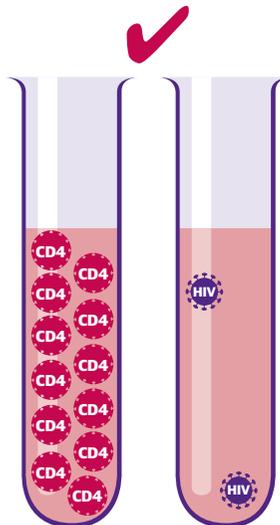
- 3** Viral load measures how much HIV there is in a drop of blood. You want to have as little HIV as possible.



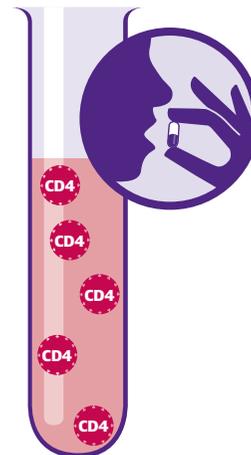
- 4** When the CD4 count is low, the viral load is usually high. This situation is not good.



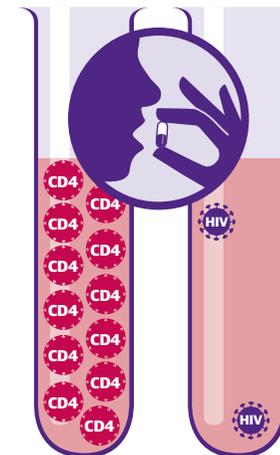
- 5** When the CD4 count is high, the viral load is usually low. This is much better.



- 6** If your CD4 count has dropped to 350 or below, it's recommended you start treatment.



- 7** The result of treatment should be the CD4 going up, and the viral load going right down.



## Important points

- CD4 and viral load test results give essential information about the effect HIV is having on your body.
- The aim of HIV treatment is to have a very low (or 'undetectable') viral load and a high CD4 count.