

Age-in-Action promotes a better understanding and awareness of the HIV/AIDS phenomenon, its causes, symptoms and prevention. Information and training is offered to equip older persons who are in most instances called upon to care for a loved one infected with HIV/AIDS.

AIDS is a chronic, potentially life-threatening condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). By damaging your immune system, HIV interferes with your body's ability to fight the organisms that cause disease.

The symptoms of HIV and AIDS vary, depending on the phase of infection.

PRIMARY INFECTION : The majority people infected by HIV develop a flu-like illness within a month or two after the virus enters the body. This illness, known as primary or acute HIV infection, may last for a few weeks. Possible symptoms include:

- Fever
- Muscle soreness
- Rash

- Headache
- Sore throat
- Mouth or genital ulcers
- Swollen lymph glands, mainly on the neck
- Joint pain
- Night sweats
- Diarrhea

Although the symptoms of primary HIV infection may be mild enough to go unnoticed, the amount of virus in the blood stream (viral load) is particularly high at this time. As a result, HIV infection spreads more efficiently during primary infection than during the next stage of infection.

These early HIV symptoms usually disappear within a week to a month and are often mistaken for those of another viral infection. During this period, you are very infectious. More-persistent or more-severe symptoms of HIV infection may not appear for several years after the initial infection.

The symptoms that indicate an early HIV infection are extremely common. Often, you can't tell them apart from symptoms of another viral infection. And some people infected with HIV don't experience early

symptoms. If you're concerned that you might have been exposed to HIV, talk to your doctor about your testing options.

WHERE CAN YOU GET TESTED FOR HIV?

Most public health facilities test for HIV. The test is free; there are no costs to have the tests done.

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE AND AFTER THE TEST IS DONE?

Counseling is done before the test for HIV is done, as well as after the results are made available. Counseling is done irrespective of whether you are HIV-positive or HIV-negative. At some facilities two tests are done and it takes approximately 20 minutes to get the results. Some cases are complicated and a sample of blood might have to be sent to a laboratory. In this instance it could take a few days for the results to be available. These tests are very accurate.

It is important to go to a public health facility or private doctor with expertise in HIV/AIDS. You should have regular check-ups to monitor the progression of your HIV infection. Having your viral load and CD4 count checked should be done for free at public health facilities. It is important to have it checked at least twice a year.

Once infected with HIV, you might get an HIV- related opportunistic infection. Most HIV-related illnesses can be treated using proven medicines.

HIV cannot be cured but it can be treated as a chronic, manageable disease. Antiretrovirals (medicines) help people with HIV to live nearly normal lives. You only need to start taking antiretrovirals when a serious HIV-related illness is developed or when your CD4 count drops to below 350. These antiretrovirals are available free at public health facilities.

HIV is a manageable chronic disease if you follow sound medical advice.

RESOURCES

Aids Helpline	0800 012 322
HIV911	0860 448 911
Life Line	0861 322 322
TAC	021 422 1700

According to a 2011 UNAIDS **World AIDS Day Report**, “the total number of new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa has dropped by more than 26%, down to 1.9 million [1.7 million–2.1 million] from the estimated 2.6 million [2.4 million–2.8 million] at the height of the epidemic in 1997. In 22 sub-Saharan countries, research shows HIV incidence declined by more than 25% between 2001 and 2009. This includes some of the world’s largest epidemics in Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The annual HIV incidence in South Africa, though still high, dropped by a third between 2001 and 2009 from 2.4% [2.1%–2.6%] to 1.5% [1.3%–1.8%].

South Africa also suffers the world’s greatest burden of HIV and tuberculosis, yet it is making great strides to address both diseases. About 210 000 people with tuberculosis were tested for HIV in 2010 and 60% were identified as HIV positive.”

**DO YOU NEED HELP
OR ARE YOU AT
RISK OF BEING
INFECTED?**



AGE-IN-ACTION BRANCHES

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Eastern Cape

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Mpumalanga

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HIV/AIDS



**World Aids Day
1 December**