

HIV / AIDS

HIV/AIDS

The human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV) are one of the most prevalent disease among South Africans. Although there are medication available to lengthen your life and make the symptoms of this virus more bearable, the virus in itself is not treatable. HIV attacks your immune system and decrease your ability to attack infections and foreign material that enter your body. AIDS is a more advanced stage of the HIV virus.

Transmission

HIV is a sexually transmitted diseases (See page 65-66) and are transmitted through infected body fluids, such as blood, semen and vaginal fluids.

Symptoms

Symptoms of HIV typically only develop when the disease are more advanced. You can have no symptoms of HIV and still be infected by the virus. A person may also present with flu-like symptoms (headache, fatigue, fever, muscle aches) during the early stages of a HIV infection.

Diagnosis

Many people that has HIV are not aware of it. Symptoms usually only appear late. This is why it is so important to always know your and your partner's HIV status (and notify your partner of your own HIV status). You can get tested at any clinic, hospital or pop-up testing station. All tests are confidential. HIV testing are quick and simply done by taking a few drops of blood and using a test strip. If the test is inconclusive blood will be sent to the lab for a more definitive result. If you are diagnosed positive for HIV, you have to see a doctor as soon as possible to start with treatment. HIV can be a scary disease to live with, but always know that you are not alone. You can receive counseling at you nearest clinic or hospital. Help can furthermore be found at the 'National Aids Helpline' – 0800 012 322 (24 hour, National helpline)

Treatment

The treatment of HIV is difficult, because the virus grows and increases within your body cells. Your body cannot detect the virus early to launch an attack against it. The virus also has a great ability to change it's form from time to time (mutate). Antiretroviral therapy (ARV) can be used to increase your life expectancy and your standard of living. It will, however, not resolve the virus. This medication can be prescribed by a doctor.

