



- HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is a virus that damages the cells in a person's immune system and weakens the body's ability to fight everyday infections and disease.
- Today, people in the UK diagnosed with HIV get treatment called ART that is very effective, easy to take and with few if any side effects. This allows nearly everyone with HIV in the UK to live normal, long and healthy lives.
- HIV is found in blood and bodily fluids such as semen, vaginal and anal fluids. The most common route of transmission is sexual contact.
- You can't get HIV from sweat, spit, urine; or from sharing towels, razors, toothbrushes; or from hugging and kissing; or from toilet seats or swimming pools; or from sharing crockery or cutlery; or from animals or insect bites.
- There is no cure for HIV. But ART reduces the amount of virus in the blood to such low levels (called an undetectable viral load) that means it cannot damage the immune system any more.
- ART should be started as soon as you are able after diagnosis. It means taking medicine (often just one tablet once a day) throughout your life to keep you healthy.
- If you are on ART with an undetectable viral load, then you cannot pass HIV on to anyone else by sexual transmission. This is called U=U - undetectable equals untransmittable.
- PrEP is a way for someone who is HIV-negative to protect themselves from getting HIV. It is a pill containing antiviral drugs to be taken before and after sex, as prescribed. It virtually eliminates the risk of getting HIV when taken properly.
- PEP is a way for someone who is HIV-negative to avoid getting HIV after sex where there is significant risk of exposure to HIV. It means taking HIV drugs for a month, and needs to be started as soon as possible after exposure, and no later than 72 hours after exposure. You can get PEP from a hospital A&E department.
- The Equality Act (2010) protects people with HIV against discrimination. Employers need to make reasonable adjustments to prevent you being disadvantaged at work. These could include time off for clinic appointments. But stigma still exists.
- If you are thinking of telling others about your HIV, consider carefully who you want to tell, why, and when, where and how you will tell them. Get support from your healthcare team or peer mentors before telling people, if needed.
- In most cases, HIV is not a barrier to travel abroad. Take all your medicines with you (best in your hand luggage) with a bit extra in case of delays. Take a letter from your healthcare team. This does not need to mention HIV, only a chronic condition. Get advice on how to take your ART in different time zones, and on what vaccinations are needed and suitable for people with HIV.
- HIV prevention, testing and treatment is free in the UK for everyone. Most people get their care from specialist HIV clinics; you can decide which of these to use.

