



## How is HIV treated?

If you are diagnosed with HIV, you will be offered treatment which can be used to control your HIV infection when taken correctly. It keeps your immune system working effectively and also means you cannot transmit the virus to sexual partners.

If diagnosed early enough, treatment is very effective and people have a good life expectancy; this can be the same as people without HIV.

There have been massive advances in HIV treatment, but there is still no cure.

## Reducing the risk

- If you have anal or vaginal sex then condoms with water based or silicone based lube is a good way to reduce the risk of HIV transmission. Other methods include PrEP and being on effective treatment.
- Know your own HIV status.
- Empower yourself and partners by learning about HIV and being comfortable talking about it.
- Be HIV tested and STI screened regularly.
- If you are HIV positive; take medication regularly and be aware of your viral load.
- Condoms put on properly are very reliable.

- However, occasionally they tear, split or roll off during sex. Using the correct size condom will help reduce this problem.
- Ideally, check during sex to spot any breakages and replace when needed.
- Using plenty of water based or silicone based lube reduces the risk of the condom breaking. During anal sex, lube should be put inside the anus as well as onto the condom.
- Be aware of the ways HIV is acquired during sex e.g. being the receptive partner/the bottom without a condom is the highest risk.

## What are PEP & PrEP?

PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) is a treatment that may prevent HIV infection after possible exposure to HIV.

A course of PEP must be started within 72 hours of HIV exposure. The earlier you start PEP the more effective it is.

PEP is available from Sexual Health Clinics and A&E departments.

On occasion people do experience side effects.

PrEP (Pre Exposure Prophylaxis) is a course of HIV drugs taken before sex to reduce the risk of getting HIV.

At the time of producing this leaflet, PrEP is not available on the NHS in England, however it is available to buy online.



# HIV

**Information, advice  
and support**

**Yorkshire  
MESMAC**



## What is it?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that weakens the immune system.

Without diagnosis and treatment HIV will normally lead to serious illness and death.

## How is HIV passed on?

HIV is passed on sexually if you have sex without a condom with someone who is HIV positive and not on effective treatment.

Not everyone knows their HIV status so you are unable to rely on what people tell you.

There is enough HIV in blood, cum and pre-cum to transmit infection. Spit, sweat and urine do not have enough HIV in them to infect anyone unless they contain blood.

Vaginal and anal sex without a condom are high risk sexual activities for HIV.

The riskiest type of sex is receiving anal sex, ie bottoming.

Oral sex is low risk as long as you avoid brushing your teeth within an hour of oral sex (before and after) and if there are no cuts in your mouth, cold sores, mouth ulcers or gum disease.

HIV can be passed on through sharing needles and other injecting equipment.

If you have another sexually transmitted infection such as chlamydia or gonorrhoea, then this can increase the risk of being infected by HIV.

There is no risk of HIV being transmitted if the person living with HIV is on treatment and has an undetectable viral load.

## How do I know if I have HIV?

Often people newly infected with HIV do not experience any telltale signs or symptoms.

Getting tested for HIV is the only way of knowing what your HIV status is.

Re-testing every 3 months is recommended for those with multiple partners and those engaging in or planning on having unprotected sex.

Sometimes after 2-6 weeks of HIV infection, some people get a flu-like illness with a fever, swollen glands, sore throat or a rash on the body. This does not happen all the time and may be confused with a cold or flu.

HIV tests look for antibodies made against HIV. Antibodies are your immune system's reaction to HIV infection.

Tests from Yorkshire MESMAC will detect HIV accurately between 4 and 12 weeks after possible exposure; your worker will inform you which test they are using.

P24 Antigen tests used in Sexual Health Clinics detect HIV accurately after 4 weeks of possible exposure.

Tests from both places are free, confidential and separate from your medical record.

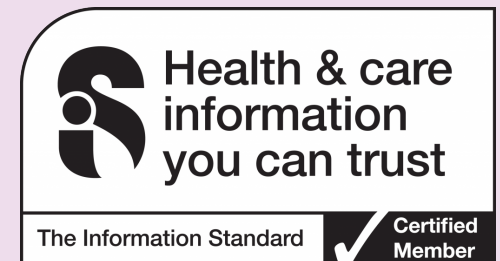
You can choose to have an HIV test at your GP and this will remain on your GP record. If the result is positive, your GP would be required to share this information with insurance and mortgage companies, plus employers, if requested to do so.

Remember it's your decision to test; you should never feel pressured into taking an HIV test.



GROUP OF SERVICES

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For the most up to date information on PEP and PrEP, visit [www.mesmac.co.uk](http://www.mesmac.co.uk) or give us a call on 01132 444209

Bashh 2016  
Nice 2016

Reviewed May 2019  
Review due March 2022