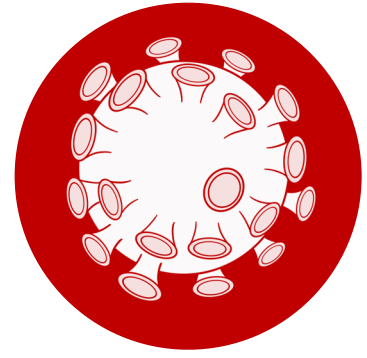


# KNOW ABOUT HIV & AIDS?



For many people, HIV can now be a manageable, lifelong, condition, and with the continuous developments in treatment and care, people who are HIV+ are living longer and healthier lives than ever before. There is still though, a lot of misunderstanding and stigmas associated with the virus that can make it difficult for a person to manage a diagnosis. Support is available for anyone living with or affected by HIV through specialist HIV services across the country.

## What is HIV?

HIV stands for:

**H**uman  
**I**mmuno-deficiency  
**V**irus

When someone is infected with HIV, the virus attaches onto the specific cells in the immune system that helps protect us and keeps us healthy. Without treatment, it will eventually kill off these cells, weakening the immune system so that it is unable to fight off other infections and illnesses.

## How is HIV transmitted?

In the UK, HIV is most commonly transmitted through unprotected sex with someone with an unknown HIV infection, though it can also be passed in other ways such as sharing injecting equipment, or from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, and breast feeding.

**HIV can only be passed on if the following bodily fluids are absorbed into your body: blood (& blood products), semen, vaginal fluids, breast milk, or anal mucous**

## What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for:

**A**cquired  
**I**mmune  
**D**eficiency  
**S**yndrome



and describes the number of infections and illnesses that can be life-threatening, and happen when a person's immune system has been severely damaged by the HIV virus.

**AIDS cannot be transmitted from one person to another, the HIV virus can.**

## Did you know?

Advancements in HIV treatment and care means that more and more people who are living with HIV are achieving what is known as an undetectable viral load, meaning that not only are they able to live longer, healthier lives, they also cannot pass the infection on to others.

**U=U**  
UNDETECTABLE  
=  
UNTRANSMITTABLE

# HOW TO PREVENT NEW HIV INFECTIONS

## Test regularly and know your HIV status

Anyone who is sexually active and changes partners is advised to have a full STI screen (including HIV and syphilis) at least once a year. Other people who might be at a higher risk of infection, such as men who have sex with men, might be advised to test more often, sometimes up to once every three months. The earlier an infection is detected, the easier it would be to treat.



## Use condoms for sex

Condoms, both external (going over the penis) and internal (fitting inside the vagina) are effective barrier methods of preventing sexually transmitted infections including HIV, along with preventing unintended pregnancies.

## Treatment as prevention

For some people, using PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis) can be an effective way of reducing the chances of contracting the HIV virus. PrEP can be used daily, or for some, as required, and is available free of charge from Sexual Health Services through the NHS. If you would like to know more about PrEP visit: [bit.ly/SHSPrEP](https://bit.ly/SHSPrEP)



## Treatment

Treatment for HIV is known as Combination Therapy and includes taking 1-4 pills per day to slow down the reproduction of HIV in the body. Advancements in treatment means that more and more people have a undetectable viral load and cannot pass the infection on.

## What do I do if?...

If you are concerned that you, or someone you know, may have been exposed to HIV and there is a likelihood of transmission occurring, you can access PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) which is sometimes also known as PEPSE. It's very important that you start PEP as soon as possible (ideally within 24 hour) and no later than 72 hours from exposure. PEP is a month-long course of treatment that must be completed to be effective.

PEP is available from Sexual Health Sheffield, or from Accident & Emergency at the Northern General Hospital outside of office hours. For more information visit: [bit.ly/SHSheff](https://bit.ly/SHSheff)