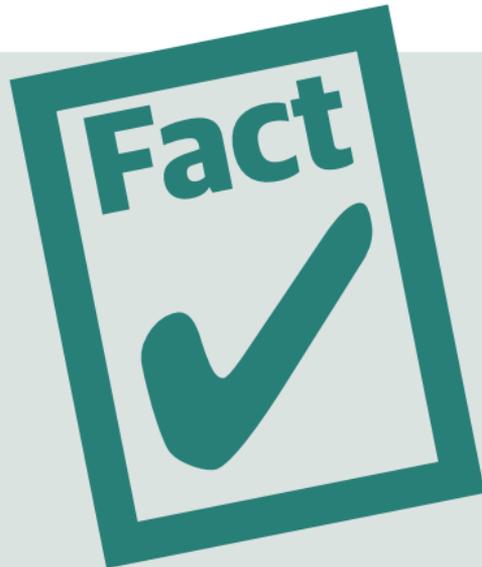


The basics

Myths and facts



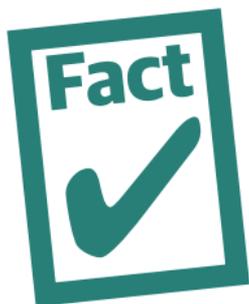
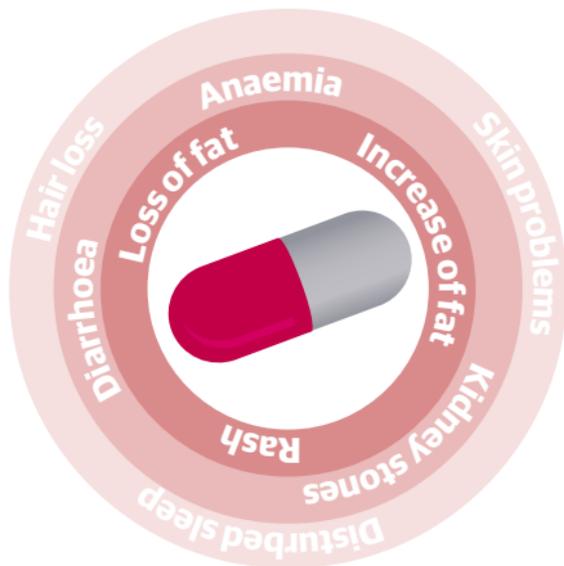
**There's a lot of misunderstanding
about HIV and AIDS.**

**Not everything that you hear about
HIV and AIDS is true.**

**This booklet will help you separate
the myths from the facts.**



HIV treatment has terrible side effects.

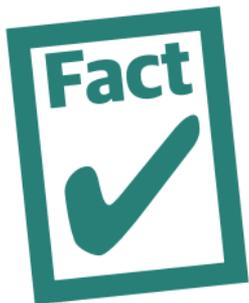


Today's anti-HIV drugs have fewer and less severe side effects than the drugs used in the past.

Most side effects are caused by the body getting used to a new drug and they go away after a few weeks. Severe, long-term side effects are much less common. If one drug does cause you problems, your doctor can usually give you a different drug.



**HIV is
man-made.**

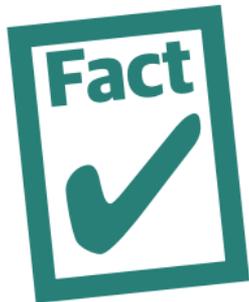
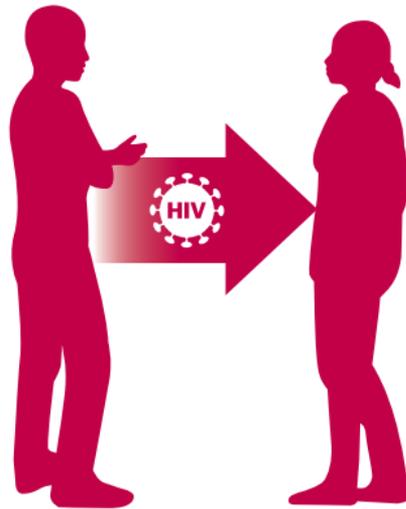


**HIV is closely related to a similar virus found
in chimpanzees. It has existed in humans
since at least the 1950s.**

Scientists believe the virus crossed to humans when a man who was hunting chimpanzees was wounded and blood from a chimpanzee entered his bloodstream.



People with HIV can infect others during everyday social contact.

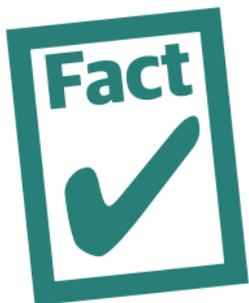


HIV can only be passed on when one person's body fluids (for example, blood, semen and fluids from the vagina, but not saliva) get inside another person's body.

This doesn't happen when you hug or talk to someone, or when you use the same fork, cup, plate, towel or bathroom as another person. So there is no risk of passing on HIV in these situations.



Foreigners are deported from the UK because they have HIV.

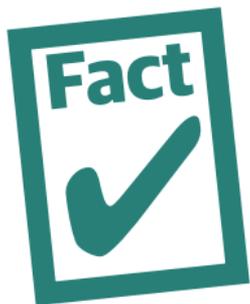


People are not deported or given permission to stay because they have HIV.

HIV is never the reason for a person being deported. And it does not help a person to stay, apart from in a small number of exceptional cases.



You don't need to start taking anti-HIV drugs until you feel ill.

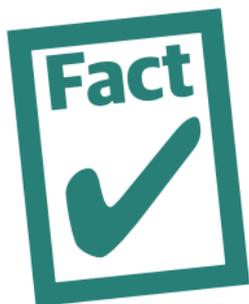
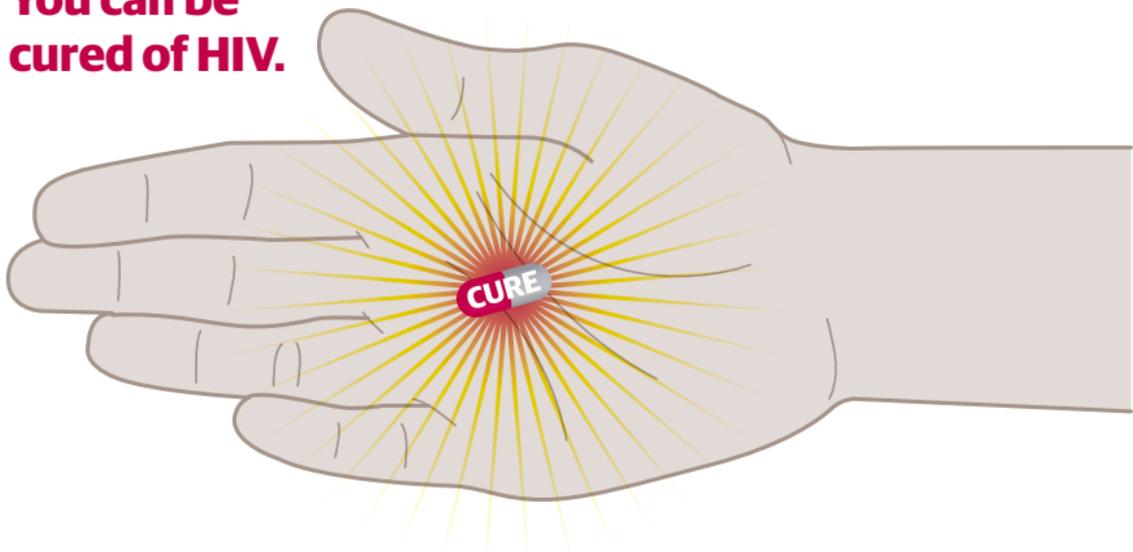


Without treatment, HIV silently damages the immune system (the body's defence system). Some of the damage cannot be repaired.

It's much better to start taking treatment before the immune system is damaged – this helps prevent future illnesses. A blood test called a CD4 count tells you when it's a good idea to start taking treatment.



**You can be
cured of HIV.**



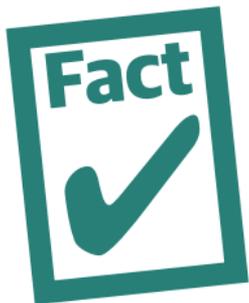
**Despite a lot of scientific research, there is still
no cure for HIV.**

HIV treatment can get rid of most of the HIV in the body, but the virus never entirely disappears. It will still be present in some parts of the body, like the intestines. If you stop taking your anti-HIV drugs, HIV will start spreading throughout your body.



People with HIV pass their infection on every time they have sex.

100%

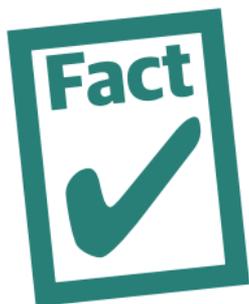
A large red "100%" graphic. A red arrow points from the first zero to the second zero. A small red circle with the letters "HIV" inside is positioned on the arrow.

Just as a woman doesn't become pregnant each time she has sex, HIV is not passed on each time either.

If a condom is used correctly, there is hardly any risk of HIV being passed on. If the person with HIV is also taking anti-HIV drugs, the risk is even lower.



'Health tourists' come to the UK to take advantage of NHS health care.

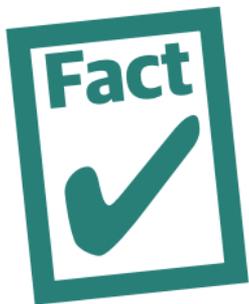
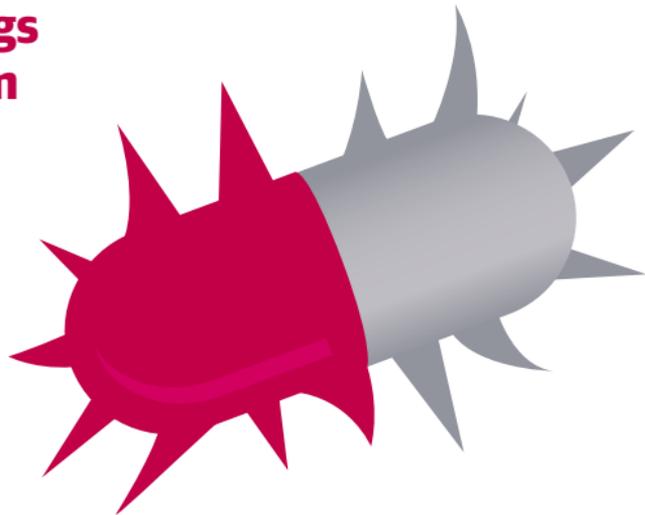


There are many reasons why people move to the UK, but the NHS is rarely one of them.

If people moved to the UK because of the NHS, they would probably start to use health services soon after they arrived. In fact, the average length of time between a person arriving in the UK and getting care from an HIV clinic is five years.



**Anti-HIV drugs
do more harm
than good.**

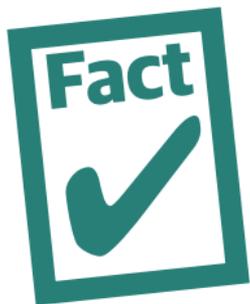


**Without anti-HIV drugs, most people with HIV
become seriously ill, develop AIDS and die
at a young age.**

When HIV treatment is taken in good time, it allows people to live a long and healthy life. Most side effects go away after a few weeks and have no long-term consequences. People taking anti-HIV drugs have their health carefully monitored to check they are doing well.



Herbs and nutritional supplements can be as effective as anti-HIV drugs.

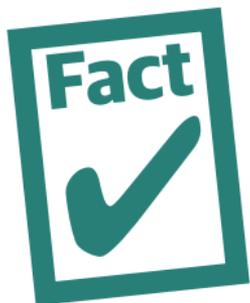
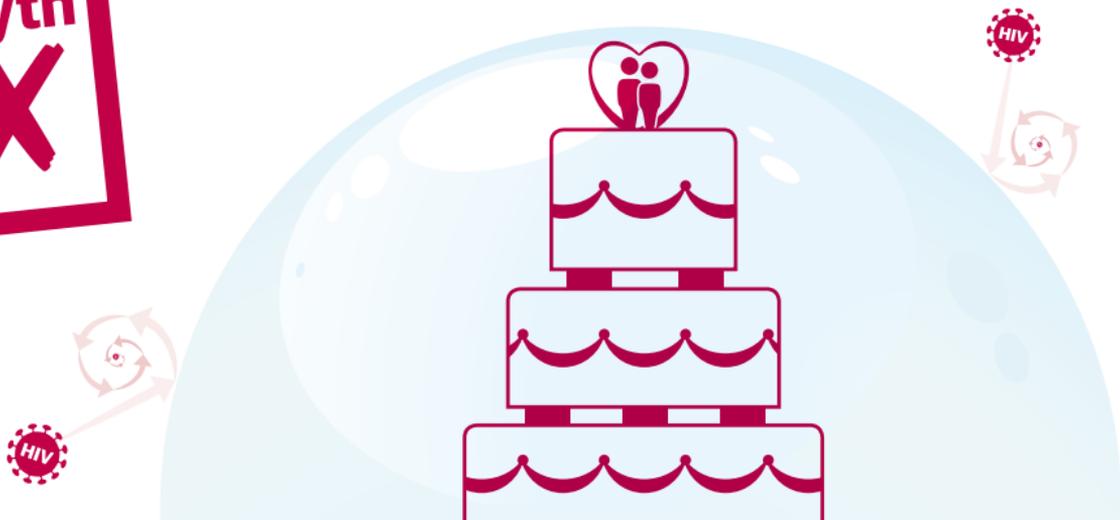


Some herbs and supplements may be good for your general health, but they cannot prevent HIV from infecting new cells and spreading.

Only anti-HIV drugs have been proven, by scientific research, to prevent HIV from spreading in the body. Also, some herbal supplements stop anti-HIV drugs from working correctly. They can reduce the amount of the drug that gets into the blood, making it less effective against HIV.



You can't get HIV if you are married.

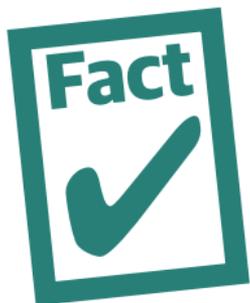


Unfortunately, millions of people who are married or in long-term stable relationships have become HIV-positive.

This has sometimes happened because one partner had HIV before they met. It has also happened when one of the partners has been unfaithful and had unprotected sex.



A drug company has found a cure for HIV, but is keeping it secret to protect its profits.



Scientists and drug companies have not yet discovered a cure for HIV.

There are many different drug companies producing anti-HIV drugs and they are very competitive. If one of the companies could sell a cure, they would earn far more money than their competitors. Research continues.

Want to find out more?

For more information on this topic:

- read our 'Transmission facts', 'How treatment works', 'Side effects' and 'An HIV treatment journey' leaflets; or
- speak to an adviser at THT Direct (phone: 0808 802 1221).

For more information about HIV

You can get free fact sheets, booklets, email bulletins and a newsletter from our website at www.aidsmap.com/resources. You can get answers to common questions at www.aidsmap.com/hiv-basics and find local services at www.aidsmap.com/e-atlas.

Contact us by calling 020 3242 0820 or by sending an email to info@nam.org.uk

Has this resource been useful to you?

Please let us know what you think by visiting our website at www.aidsmap.com/feedback, phoning us or sending an email to info@nam.org.uk. Your feedback helps us to improve the services we offer you.

You can contact us to find out more about the scientific research and information we have used to produce this leaflet.

We recommend that you discuss the information in this leaflet with a doctor or other health worker.

NAM

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Charity number 1011220

With thanks to the staff and service users at the following organisations, for the feedback that shaped these resources: Africa Advocacy Foundation, African Culture Promotions, Community Health Action Trust, Ernest Foundation, Ffena (African Health Policy Network), HIV Health Trainers (Terrence Higgins Trust), First Point (Metro Centre), Positive Care Link, Salem Health Project, Widows and Orphans International.

Thanks to the MAC AIDS Fund for funding this leaflet.

This leaflet can be viewed in large format as a PDF.
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First edition 2012
Due for review in 2014
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