

HIV

TESTING SAVES LIVES.

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WHAT IS HIV?

An educational booklet supported by:

SAVING LIVES



BIRMINGHAM HEARTLANDS
HIV SERVICE 



HIV TESTING
SAVES LIVES.

ASK for the **TEST**
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A message from our founding patron, Stiliyan Petrov, and founding ambassador, Matt Murray

"As the founding patron and ambassador of Football Saving Lives, it was our goal to see a player from every team in the Premier League supporting the charity. In that way, the Saving Lives message about the importance of HIV education and testing could reach literally millions of people.

"It's fantastic that this is now beginning to happen. The charity has ambassadors and supporters at some of the biggest clubs in the world. We hope these new ambassadors will carry on the work we began - and take it to the next level.

"It is only through talking about HIV that each of us can help end the stigma which continues to claim the lives of people living with HIV and AIDS.

"We hope you, too, will get involved and give your support to Saving Lives."

Stiliyan Petrov

*Former Captain of Aston Villa Football Club and the Bulgarian National team
November 2013*

Matt Murray

*Former , England and Wolves Goalkeeper
November 2013*





HIV in the UK

- There are more than 100,000 people living with HIV in the UK.
- One quarter of those are not even aware they are carrying the virus – that's 25,000 people.
- The only way to know if you are infected is to take a simple blood test.
- Without testing, people can't access life-saving treatment.
- Without treatment, people can infect their sexual partners.
- If you have HIV and do not get tested, without treatment you will develop life-threatening conditions.
- With early treatment you can live a full and productive life.

What is HIV?

Human
Immunodeficiency
Virus

HIV is a type of virus known as a 'retrovirus', and was discovered during the 1980s.

HIV attacks your body's natural defences (or immune system), and over time affects how well they can fight infections.

That means that people with HIV are at risk of developing some life-threatening infections - and certain cancers - which someone with a healthy immune system could usually fight off.

The HIV virus can be detected by a simple blood test. Those who carry the virus are referred to as being 'HIV-positive'.

There is no cure for HIV. But there are now more than 20 anti-HIV medicines, which can keep you healthy for a very long time - but only if you are diagnosed early.

There is no need to let HIV damage your immune system - if you are tested and treated early.

That is why HIV testing really can save lives.





What is AIDS?

Acquired
Immune
Deficiency
Syndrome.

AIDS is the name for what happens when an HIV-positive person develops a number of potentially life-threatening infections and cancers. This happens when their immune system has been severely damaged by HIV.

You cannot catch AIDS - it is HIV which people pass between each other. That's why there is no AIDS test - instead, there is a test for the HIV infection.

AIDS is caused by HIV. It is HIV which can be passed on. If undiagnosed, HIV can lead to AIDS.

AIDS means different things for different people. Having AIDS does not necessarily mean someone will die - but it does mean they need special and urgent medical care and treatment.

How is HIV transmitted?

There are four ways in which HIV can be transmitted from one person to another:

1. Sex without a condom

The majority of people get HIV by having unprotected sex. Anyone can catch HIV like this: man or woman, straight or gay, black or white.

Condoms are currently the best way to reduce the risk of becoming infected with HIV or giving it to someone else during sex. Using a condom is a mark of respect.

2. Use of contaminated needles

Sharing needles is a high risk behaviour and a potential cause of HIV transmission. If, for any reason, you have an injection (for example, steroids or any other medical treatment), you should always make sure it is a clean needle and has not been used by anybody else.

3. Blood and blood products

Due to advances in medical screening, there is very little risk that transmission could now occur through a blood transfusion or during an organ transplant. Virtually every country now has effective screening mechanisms to ensure that this does not happen.

4. Mother to child transmission

Children can become infected from their mother at childbirth or through breast feeding, if the mother is HIV positive.

However, this risk can be almost completely prevented provided the mother's HIV status is known in advance and she is put on effective HIV treatment early in pregnancy.

Over 95% of women in the UK now have HIV tests during pregnancy. This has led to huge reductions in the numbers of babies who become infected with HIV - that's the power of the test!





You CAN'T catch HIV by:

- Touching objects, foods or clothes.
- Eating any food, cooked or uncooked, with blood on it.
- Using a sterile needle at a clinic or other health centre.
- Being bitten by a human.
- Being bitten by an insect, including a mosquito.
- Having contact with an animal.
- Living in the same house as someone who is HIV-positive.
- Stabbing your finger with a sewing or knitting needle.
- Sitting on a bus or train seat with blood on it - even if it gets through to your underwear!
- Cleaning nail clippers.
- Using a knife, fork, spoon, cup or plate that an HIV-positive person may have used.
- Getting sexual fluid on your skin.
- Getting sexual fluid on a cut that has already healed over. A cut has to be open to be at risk of HIV.

Effective barriers against HIV

- **Skin:** Skin is an excellent barrier against HIV, unless there is an open cut or open wound. Infectious fluid on skin is not a route for infection.
- **Mucous membranes in the mouth, throat and stomach:** These membranes, or linings, are good barriers against HIV infection, there are no cuts, ulcers or sores.
- **Saliva:** Saliva contains proteins and a low salt content that actively reduce its infectiousness. Even when HIV is detected it is unlikely to be in sufficient quantity to cause infection. HIV is not transmitted by kissing, including deep kissing. Spit cannot transmit HIV.
- **Air:** HIV is not transmitted through the air.
- **Condoms:** Latex and polyurethane condoms can prevent infection from HIV and many other sexually transmitted infections if used correctly.
- **Many sexual situations have no risk of transmitting HIV.** These include masturbation (by yourself or with a partner), kissing and deep kissing, and receiving oral sex and vaginal or anal sex when using a condom correctly.





What are the symptoms of HIV?

The symptoms of HIV vary from person to person. The only way to be sure if you have been infected with HIV is to have an HIV test. You cannot tell from symptoms alone.

If you have HIV, it's very important that it is diagnosed, so that you have best chance of getting treatment and care - and of staying well.

Soon after first being infected with HIV, many people may have an illness. Doctors call this a 'seroconversion' illness, and this may include a fever, sore throat, headache, aches and pains, and a blotchy red rash.

In some people this illness is so mild that it passes without being noticed. Some people mistake it for the flu, but for others it is more severe and they may need to see a doctor. However, because the symptoms are similar to symptoms of many other conditions, HIV might not be diagnosed at the time.

If you've had unprotected sex and notice these symptoms about two weeks later, you might want to consider having an HIV test.

The other symptoms of HIV: What happens next?

After the initial 'seroconversion' illness, it's not uncommon for people to live with HIV and not have any symptoms at all for many years. But the virus will still be causing damage to the immune system, and without treatment most people with HIV will eventually become ill because of it.

HIV-related illnesses can cause a wide range of symptoms. These can include fevers and night sweats, a high temperature, a cough that won't go away, unexplained weight loss, severe diarrhoea, bad headaches, or persistent mouth and skin problems. Of course, these can all have other causes.

Importantly, you can still transmit HIV to any of your sexual partners during this time. People can remain well but infectious for a period of up to 10 years!

Generally, people infected with HIV change their behaviour and protect other people from catching it.

By taking HIV medication correctly, the probability that a person will transmit HIV during unprotected sex is extremely unlikely.





What is the life expectancy for someone with HIV?

This depends upon whether HIV is diagnosed early or late. That's why testing is so important.

Some people who are diagnosed very late still die because of overwhelming infections. If they do survive they can be left with severe disabilities.

Modern HIV treatment means that people who are diagnosed early are living long and healthy lives. In fact, some doctors are hopeful that many people with HIV will live a near-normal life expectancy.

A lot of effort is going into making effective HIV treatment available to everyone who needs it. However, this is not always possible in some parts of the world. Without treatment, people with HIV will almost always eventually become ill, and their lives may be shortened.

Your best chance of staying well is to start treatment at the right time. To do this you need to know you have HIV. Many of the people who die from HIV-related illnesses in countries where treatment is easily available - such as the UK - were diagnosed very late, often not until they were already very ill.

How can you help Save Lives?

Raise Awareness.

- Educate yourself.
- Educate others.
- Fight the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS.

Look after your sexual health.

- Ask for the test at your GP, at Hospital or a Sexual Health clinic.
- If somebody offers you an HIV test don't be insulted, it's a good opportunity! Take the test. It could save your life!
- You can then concentrate on staying negative - or get life-saving treatment if you are positive.

Help us save lives

- Make a donation to help us raise HIV awareness.
- Organise an event to raise money for Saving Lives.
- You can learn about donating to Saving Lives at our website, www.savinglivesuk.com.

Donate

There are a variety of ways you can contribute to Saving Lives:



Method 1: Text a Donation

If you can spare a few pounds to help fund our campaign, please text **SAVE14** to 70070. Add your preferred donation – £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10. (You text might look like "**SAVE14 £5**", for instance.)



Method 2: Use Our Virgin Money Giving Page

You can visit our Virgin Money Giving Page , <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com> search for Saving Lives UK.



Method 3: Make A Money Transfer

You can place money direct into our account via BACS – we are account number 10045454, sort code 40-27-39. We are happy to provide receipts.



Method 4: Send a Cheque

Cheques should be made payable to Saving Lives and addressed to Saving Lives, MIDRU Building, Heartlands Hospital, Bordesley Green East, Birmingham, B9 5SS.

SAVING LIVES

www.savinglivesuk.com

Our aims are to:

- Increase HIV awareness
- Reduce stigma and increase testing
- Reduce the number of people who have HIV and do not know it
- Help undiagnosed positive people access life-saving treatment
- Reduce the spread of HIV

Our ultimate goal is to save lives.



Follow us

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Contact us

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This booklet aims to give you the basics about HIV. It has been written by our Saving Lives HIV experts, doctors from the Birmingham Heartlands HIV service and in collaboration with NAM and HIV i-Base. More information about HIV/AIDS can be found at their websites: www.aidsmap.com and www.i-base.info

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