

Fighting AIDS

Joint Responsibility
(To be among the world's countries with the lowest rates of AIDS)
(To reach zero new AIDS cases by 2015)



Ministry of Health

National AIDS Program

Fighting AIDS is a joint responsibility

Together towards becoming among the world's countries with the lowest rates of AIDS by achieving ZERO cases of:

- New AIDS cases
- New AIDS births
- Deaths caused by AIDS
- Stigma and discrimination



Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) AIDS virus fact sheets

What's the meaning of AIDS? What does it mean to have AIDS?

AIDS – or the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome- is a term defined by US-based Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The virus causing this disease is called the Human Immunodeficiency Virus – HIV.

HIV is the virus responsible for AIDS, as it attacks the immune system, in particular the CD4 white blood cells responsible for protecting the body against germ attacks. When someone is HIV positive this means they have contracted the virus and thus live with it for the rest of their lives. An HIV positive person can transmit the virus to other people.

A Simple Definition of AIDS Disease:

AIDS happens when HIV enters the healthy body and starts multiplying, while attacking, destroying and disrupting the functions of immune system cells, called T-cells. The virus lives and multiplies within these cells, gradually destroying them and leaving the body weak and unable to fight diseases caused by bacteria and viruses. This leads to gradual symptoms that vary from one person to another depending on the level of active immune cells in the body.

Transmission of AIDS, Contracting HIV:

HIV is transmitted from an infected person to a healthy person when the virus enters the latter's body through one of the globally recognized modes of transmission. An infected person might infect others whether or not they are aware of their condition. Similarly, the person receiving the virus will not realize that they were infected when the virus enters their body or even when symptoms start to appear. The only way to confirm infection is by testing for HIV.

The Difference between an HIV positive person and an AIDS patient:

All these terms mean that the person was exposed to HIV at some point. It is important to know that every AIDS patient is considered HIV positive once the virus enters their body through any of the known modes of transmission, regardless of the appearance of symptoms. The period between infection and symptom appearance varies from several months to several years, sometimes up to 15 years.

The term "AIDS patient" indicates the later stages of HIV infection, when the virus has attacked and disrupted the function of most immune cells. At this stage, serious symptoms appear due to opportunistic infections and cancers. It ends with the death of the patient when it is no longer possible to contain or cure these symptoms with medications.

The HIV Journey:

HIV inside the human body:

As mentioned earlier, HIV attacks the immune system responsible for producing immune cells to protect the body against various infections and certain cancers. When infected, the immune system can no longer fight diseases resulting from germs that a healthy person can normally fight with or without help of medication. However, an HIV positive person can improve their immunity by using special HIV drugs that, although do not eliminate the virus, can send it into latency and limit its ability to destroy immune cells. The earlier a person starts the treatment, the higher level of immune cells they will have, and the better they can fight diseases.

The Early Symptoms of HIV Infection:

Once HIV enters the human body, general and unspecific symptoms start to appear, and are similar to those of catching a cold or the flu. These include fever, sore throat, joint pain, skin rashes, fatigue, headache and swelling in some lymph nodes. The symptoms usually disappear one or two weeks after infection, and the infected person is very likely to infect others during this period due to the multiplying virus. HIV can be transmitted during this period from the infected individual to a healthy person through any of the unprotected practices or known modes of transmission. It is possible that such symptoms don't appear directly upon infection, leaving the infected person unaware during this period. Either way it is still possible to transmit the virus to others, even unknowingly. Anyone who was exposed to the risk of infection should contact a voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) center for information and to get tested early, committing to the physician's treatment recommendations to avoid further health complications.

Recognizing People with AIDS:

AIDS and Physical Appearances:

It is not possible to recognize a person with AIDS based on their appearance, since they do not show any specific symptoms that confirm infection. The only way to do that is by testing for HIV. Anyone who suspects they were exposed to the risk of infection should test for HIV. This specialized test confirms whether or not the patient has HIV or HIV antibodies, or both, in their blood.

Detecting HIV:

A few weeks following infection with HIV, the body starts producing HIV antibodies which can be detected through a lab test. This is the only way to confirm whether or not someone has contracted HIV during this period. Detecting HIV is done in two stages; the first stage is limited to measuring antibodies that were produced upon infection. This simple and quick test involves a sample of blood or saliva. Detection in the second stage measures the direct effects of HIV in the blood.

HIV Transmission:

HIV exists in the blood, or blood components, of the infected person, and in body fluids that are secreted from males and females alike during sexual interactions, even if sexual intercourse is not completed. HIV also exists in the breast milk of an infected mother. The virus can be transmitted from an infected person when their body fluids enter the health body through:

- All unprotected sexual interactions, including oral sex.
- Using a contaminated injection, sharing sharp tools contaminated with the virus, blood transfusion where the blood or any of its components is contaminated, or transplant of infected body organs in the healthy body.
- From the infected mother to her child during pregnancy, delivery or through breast milk.

Prevention and Protection against AIDS:

A healthy person can protect themselves against AIDS by avoiding the globally known modes of transmission, including:

- Avoiding unprotected sex, whether before or after marriage. Risky sexual interactions with an infected partner or, a potential HIV-positive person, are likely to cause infection.
- Using medically-approved condoms during sexual intercourse between married couples if one of them is infected, or suspects being infected.
- Refraining from kissing if the partner suffers gum cuts, bleeding or serious infections. Although the risk of infection in these cases is rare, it is better to avoid such practices to prevent infection.

- Refraining from sharing contaminated sharp tools, such as needles, shaving tools, syringes and the like.
- Contacting centers of counselling and testing to get more information about HIV and how to get prevention, as well as get tested at no cost or risk of identity exposure.

HIV and Casual Interactions with AIDS Patients:

HIV is not transmitted through the casual daily interactions with AIDS patients, such as being around them in places of work or studying, sharing food and drinks, hand shaking, hugging, or sharing public facilities, seating areas and swimming pools, provided that such interactions do not involve contact with body fluids contaminated with HIV. Moreover, HIV is not transmitted through air, sneezing or coughing, or through mosquito and other insect bites. More information can be obtained by contacting voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) centers.

Unprotected Sex and the Transmission of Disease:

HIV can be transmitted from the AIDS patient to a healthy person, whether male or female, through contact with HIV-infected body fluids that enter the healthy body through wounds, cracks or cuts in the mucus lining of genitals, during unprotected sexual intercourse. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) increase the risk of infection as they cause sores and infections, visible or otherwise, in the reproductive system. Additionally, sexual intercourse in itself can cause mild invisible scratches that increase the risk of infection. It is worth noting that females are more prone to HIV infection due to the composition of their reproductive system.

Link between STDs and AIDS:

AIDS is an STD since it is transmitted through sexual intercourse between an infected person and a healthy partner. People with STDs, or those suspected to have an STD, should get tested and treated, because the majority of STDs cause sores and wounds, visible or otherwise, that allow the transmission of viruses during sex. Women with STDs, or suspecting to suffer from one, should also get tested and treated early to avoid transmitting the disease to their children during delivery, as well as other health complications such as infertility.

Contraceptive Pills and Use by Wife with AIDS:

A woman suffering from AIDS can use contraceptive pills, under medical supervision, since some drugs used to treat AIDS may undermine the effects of contraceptives or other drugs. Women should use condoms during sexual intercourse with the infected husband at all times, to avoid being transmission of the disease or the viral load.

AIDS and Opportunistic Diseases/Infections:

It is easy for someone enjoying a healthy immune system to fight opportunistic diseases and infections. On the other hand, such infections become serious for people whose immunity is compromised by HIV infection. Opportunistic infections often attack people whose immune cell (CD4) count is less than or around 200 per cubic millimeter.

Protected Sex with an AIDS Patient who is on Viral Therapy:

It is vital for the AIDS patient to use a condom during sexual intercourse with the partner, whether healthy or infected, because the drugs used to treat AIDS symptoms do not completely eliminate HIV. Unprotected sex might pose the risk of infecting the patient with a different viral load, causing a relapse and undermining the effectiveness of treatment.

Effectiveness of Latex Condoms:

Studies show that latex condoms are 98-100% effective in preventing HIV transmission when used correctly and regularly. However, using topical and oil-based lubricants can reduce the effectiveness of the condom in preventing pregnancy, or could cause a rip in the condom thus

allowing transmission of HIV or an STD to the sexual partner. If using a lubricant is necessary, the use of water-based lubricants is recommended.

Tuberculosis is the cause of around 360,000 deaths among people living with HIV. It is the main cause of HIV-positive deaths in Africa, and around the world. Decisive health strategies should be put in place to lower the rates of TB associated with AIDS. These include:

- Intensifying efforts to detect TB
- Providing Isoniazid preventive therapy (IPT)
- Combatting TB infection
- Early treatment using antiretroviral therapy.

AIDS Diagnosis and Treatment:

A negative HIV test result during the early stage of infection, that changes into a positive result later:

It is very important to get HIV tested some time after being exposed to the virus. This period of time is called the window period, and is defined as the time needed for the body to produce HIV antibodies , and for those to be detected in the blood. The window period extends from one to 3 months, and longer in some cases. Avoiding any exposure to HIV modes of transmission during the window period is important, before the test or after a negative test result, in order to confirm the results.

A negative AIDS test result does not mean the other person is HIV-negative:

If one of the sex partners tested negative for HIV, this does not necessarily mean that the other partner is also HIV-negative. A test must be made to confirm whether or not they are infected, and vice versa. Being HIV-positive does not necessarily mean that your sex partner is also HIV-positive.

Treatment options and AIDS drug alternatives:

There are no alternative AIDS treatments other than the medically- and globally approved drugs. AIDS patients should not opt for herbal and natural treatments as this could lead to health complications, compromise the immune system and undermine the drugs' effectiveness. Eventually, the patient might experience serious relapses and stop responding to treatment.

HIV-positive. What's the next step?

Testing positive for HIV means the individual has contracted the virus, but is not necessarily showing any AIDS symptoms at present. In this case, the patient should take the necessary actions to protect themselves and their partner, and visit the nearest AIDS treatment center to receive care and prevent health complications. The patient should also receive the necessary vaccinations and tests to detect and treat any other associated diseases, such as TB. Other tests

help measure immunity and the viral load, thus indicating the patient's health situation. Good nutrition, rest and the right exercise is recommended, in addition to avoiding risky practices and following the doctor's instructions. AIDS patients should get educated about their health in order to live longer lives with less complications.

Testing for AIDS:

There are two very important tests used to monitor the health of people living with HIV: The CD4 cell count test, and the viral load test.

1. CD4 cell count test: Testing a sample of the patient's blood, this test measures the count of CD4 white blood cells. The results show the count per milliliter of blood. A normal cell count is around 500 cells/mm³. The higher the count, the healthier the immune system, which is a key factor when deciding the start of treatment, in line with WHO guidelines. It is worth noting that if an HIV-positive patient starts treatment with a very low CD4 count, their immune system can still recover gradually as long as the treatment is followed regularly and as prescribed.
2. The viral load test: This test measures the amount of virus in the blood. The result is given by the number of virus copies per milliliter. This test is important because it helps assess the effectiveness of antiviral therapy, as the viral load decreases gradually with continuous treatment. The main objective of receiving a triple therapy regimen is achieving a very low viral load that is not even detectable sometimes – though this doesn't mean the patient is HIV-free.

AIDS antiviral therapy (Triple therapy regimen):

There is no cure for HIV, but a triple, and sometimes quadruple, antiviral therapy can be used to push the virus into latency and significantly reduce the viral load-and spread. Such therapy helps slow down the decline of immune cells in blood, thus allowing the body to fight opportunistic infections that cause different diseases. If taken at the same time daily as prescribed, these treatments can lead to excellent results. An HIV-positive person will continue the therapy throughout their life, avoiding the termination of treatment or the change of the dose without their doctor's supervision. With regular treatment and follow-up, the patient can generally feel well enough to resume their daily activities and their work.

AIDS, Pregnancy and Children:

Women with AIDS can give birth to health children:

A woman suffering from AIDS can willingly become pregnant and give birth to a healthy child, provided that she follows medical advice and supervision during pregnancy and delivery, to avoid mother-to-child transmission. Studies and experience proved that this is possible under medical supervision and intervention during pregnancy. Both the mother and child should get treatment and proper care during and after the delivery to avoid infection.

Antiviral Treatment during Pregnancy:

A pregnant HIV-positive mother can safely and effectively start a triple therapy regimen during pregnancy. This type of therapy can reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission to almost zero. All pregnant women living with HIV should seek early diagnosis and treatment, regardless of the viral load result.

Mother-to-Child Transmission through Breast Milk:

Despite the importance of breast milk and its benefits in stimulating the child's immune system, a mother living with HIV could transmit the virus to her child through breastfeeding. The longer the child receives breast milk the higher the risk of infection. The risk is higher also if symptoms start appearing and the mother's immune system is deteriorating, if the viral load is higher or if signs of breast inflammation appear. The virus can be transmitted either through the breast milk which contains the virus, or through the bleeding wounds in the mother's breast during breastfeeding. It is possible for the mother to express the breast milk, heat it and feed it directly to the child, or keep it cooled to benefit from immunity stimulators.

Children and AIDS:

Healthy children who are exposed to the risk of infection from a mother suffering from AIDS after delivery or during breastfeeding should be monitored continuously by healthcare providers who are aware of AIDS symptoms in children. The mother should also receive all necessary information and know about any changes that could alert her to serious symptoms in the child that require immediate medical attention. These include refusing to feed for over 8 hours, needing more or less diaper changes, a darkening in the color of urine, an increase in breathing frequency or the child showing unusual signs/moves.

The Role of Youth in Raising Awareness:

Educating the Youth about HIV Infection:

The majority of HIV cases occurs among the youth, which is the group mainly targeted by awareness efforts. Young people enjoy better communication among their peers that with older people, and have more means of communication that enable them to have more influence among their peers. As a result, young people are well suited to help educate, motivate and encourage their peers to improve their lives and avoid risky behaviors that could lead to infection.

The Role of Youth in Raising Awareness about AIDS:

Young individuals can play a key role in preventing and controlling the transmission of HIV. From protecting themselves and their peers, their role extends to include protecting their families and communities. They need to seek more information about HIV, how it is transmitted and, more importantly, how to prevent its transmission. They can help raise awareness about health in general, and AIDS in particular, and encourage their peers to get more information about AIDS, prevention and how to seek credible information. They can also spread messages about virtues among their friends, be an example to others in avoiding risky behaviors, seeking voluntary testing, making use of available information, and encouraging AIDS patients to get immediate medical attention.

Joint Efforts to Combat AIDS:

Fighting the spread of AIDS in communities:

Limiting the spread of AIDS in any community is not possible without the collaboration and joint adoption of proper behavior by all members of this community. This is achievable if individuals are educated about ways to prevent transmission of HIV, encouraged to provide care and support to patients and their families, as well as enabled to integrate in their communities. Such achievements also require the joint efforts of all sectors.

Nationwide Strategies and Combatting AIDS:

HIV is transmitted through well known ways, and spreads more notably in communities that are lax in adopting and implementing effective ways to combat the disease. Early intervention through support programs helps raise awareness about AIDS, prevention and a lasting change in risky behaviors – this leads to higher human development rates. Fighting AIDS in any country depends on the joint efforts of the private and public sectors, in addition to all relevant parties, by addressing the underlying causes of infection. Many countries managed to reverse the spread of AIDS and reduce the number of new cases, while increasing medical coverage to all patients to control infection.

Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centers across KSA		
King Saud City	Riyadh	0114353379
Salahuddin Health Center	Riyadh – 2 nd north	0114544207 ext. 130
Al Faisaliah Center	Riyadh – Middle healthcare sector	254/47134880 253/47134880
Al Mansourah Center	Riyadh – Middle healthcare sector	0114353379
Al Sieh Medical Center	Riyadh – Al Kharj	0155444011 0115448428
King Khalid Hospital	Riyadh – Al Kharj	0115444444 ext. 275
King Khalid Hospital	Riyadh - Majmaah	0164320000 ext. 1493
Dawadmi Hospital	Riyadh - Dawadmi	0116436500
King Fahd Hospital	Al Madinah	0148460900
Khaybar Medical Center	Al Madinah - Khaybar	0148315299
Al Rayes Medical Center	Al Madinah - Badr	0143342707
Al Uqdah Medical Center	Al Madinah - Al Hanakiyah	0148622025/ 0148620064/ 0148620580
Al Mahd Medical Center	Al Madinah – Al Mahd	0148681727
Asharqiah Free Zone Medical Center	Al Madinah – Eastern Sector	0148386932
Wadi Fara General Hospital	Al Madinah – Al Rayan	0148510770
Al Hijrah Medical Center	Al Madinah – Southern Sector	0148315427
Asharqiah Medical Center	Al Madinah - Yanbu	0143226658
Al Azhari Medical Center	Al Madinah – Northern Sector	0148459140
King Faisal Hospital	Holy Makkah	0125566411 ext. 1405
Maternity and Children Hospital	Holy Makkah	0125530400 ext.7212 - 7211
Sabya General Hospital	Jizan	0173261344
Hay Ash Shati Medical Center	Jizan	0173220350
Samtah Medical Center	Jizan	0173320418
Al Aridha Medical Center	Jizan	0173316007
Prince Abdul Aziz Hospital	Arar	0146613251
Hayel Hospital	Hayel	0165328080
Asir Central Hospital	Asir	01722551155 ext.2892

Director of Health Affairs – Department of Prevention of Communicable Diseases	Asir	0172286067
Kind Fahd Hospital	Al Baha	0177254000 ext.2127
King Khalid Hospital	Najran	0175224116
King Khalid Hospital	Tabouk	0144220100
<i>Prince Abdul Rahman Al Sudairy Hospital</i>	Al Jouf	0146247200
Dammam Medical Complex	Dammam – Eastern Province	0138155777 Ext. 3353
Eastern Province Medical Center	Taif	7326643
King Saud Hospital	Jeddah	012 - 6226177
Saudi Charitable Society for AIDS Patients (SACA)	Jeddah	012- 6581666
General Health Directorate	Jeddah	0126304115
National AIDS Program	Jeddah	6870595
Saudi Charitable Society for AIDS Patients (SACA)	Jeddah	6581666
East Jeddah Hospital	Jeddah	2326555
Al Balad Medical Center	Jeddah	6442855
Gulail Medical Center	Jeddah	6363620
Al Qurainiyah Medical Center	Jeddah	6870595
Al Thaalbah Medical Center	Jeddah	6376349
Old Airport Medical Center	Jeddah	6402887
Mishrifah Medical Center	Jeddah	6654366
Al Ruwais Medical Center	Jeddah	6518040
Al Rawabi Medical Center	Jeddah	6208212
Al Zahraa Medical Center	Jeddah	6821884
Al Salamah Medical Center	Jeddah	6822393
Al Aziziyah Medical Center	Jeddah	6762561
Al Faisaliah Medical Center	Jeddah	6672848
Al Rabwa Medical Center	Jeddah	6625686
Prince Abdul Majeed Medical Center	Jeddah	6208207
Obaid & Sawaid Medical Center	Jeddah	6870595
Quwaizah Medical Center	Jeddah	6401938

Al Qahatin Medical Center	Jeddah	6870595
Khalid Model Medical Center	Jeddah	6870595
East Highway Medical Center	Jeddah	6796983
Briman Medical Center	Jeddah	6289700
Al Marwa Medical Center	Jeddah	6771087
East Highway Medical Center	Jeddah	6796983
Briman Medical Center	Jeddah	6289700
Al Marwa Medical Center	Jeddah	6771087
Department for Prevention of Communicable Diseases – National AIDS Program, King Faisal Hospital	Taif	012-7445106 012-7481699
King Khalid General Hospital	Hafar Al Batin	013-7213808 ext. 412
King Fahd Hospital - Hofuf	Hofuf	013-5750000
King Abdullah Hospital	Bisha	017-6223333 Ext. 1810 - 1809
Qonfoda Hospital	Al Qonfoda	017-7320187
Al Qurayyat General Hospital	Al Qurayyat	014-6424716
King Fahd Hospital	Al Qassim	016-3252000
Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center - Khafji		013-8155777 ext. 3353
Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center – Jubail		013-8155777 ext. 3353
Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center - Nuairiyah		013-3730400 ext.4
Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center - Qatif		013-8155777

Mobile Clinics offering Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services in KSA		
Contact	Region	Phone number
Mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services – contact AIDS coordinator	Riyadh	011-2082764
Mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services – contact AIDS coordinator	Jeddah	012-6304116
Mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services – contact AIDS coordinator	Damman (Eastern Province)	013-8060330 Ext. 318
Mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services – contact AIDS coordinator	Al Madinah	014-8370958 ext. 140
Mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services – contact AIDS coordinator	Jizan	017-3172601
Mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services – contact AIDS coordinator	Asir	017-2251155
Mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services – contact AIDS coordinator	Taif	012-7445106 Ext. 444
Mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Services – contact AIDS coordinator	Holy Makkah	012-5449743

AIDS Treatment Centers		
Hospital	Region	Phone Number
King Saud Medical City	Riyadh	011-4353379
King Saudi Hospital	Jeddah	012-6304115
King Fahd Hospital	Jeddah	012-6606111 Ext. 1442
King Abdul Aziz Hospital	Jeddah	012-6375555
King Fahd Hospital	Al Madinah	014-8460900
Asir Central Hospital	Asir	017-2251155 Ext. 2892
King Fahd Hospital	Jizan	017-3250318
Dammam Medical Complex	Dammam (Eastern Province)	013-8155777 Ext. 3353
King Fahd Hospital	Hofuf - Ihsaa	013-5750000
King Faisal Hospital	Holy Makkah	012-5566411 Ext. 1405
Al Nour Specialty Hospital	Holy Makkah	012-5665000 Ext. 1106
King Faisal Hospital	Taif	012-7481699
Al Nour Specialty Hospital	Makkah	012-5665000 Ext. 5425

For more information please visit

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Ministry of Health