

Q: What is HIV?

A: HIV is a virus (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) that affects the body's immune system. This means that a person who is HIV positive will find it harder to fight off infections.

Q: What is AIDS?

A: Once the immune system of a person who is HIV positive is damaged by a certain amount or they have a certain number of 'opportunistic infections', they are diagnosed with AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). At this point the body finds it extremely difficult to fight any infections, which means that the health of a person with AIDS will eventually deteriorate until they die.

Q: How does a person become HIV positive?

A: HIV is transmitted through blood, breast milk and other bodily fluids. The primary way a person can contract HIV is from unprotected sex, but it can also be contracted by using an infected needle or an HIV positive mother can pass it on to her child, either at birth or through breastfeeding.

Q: Can HIV be cured?

A: There is currently no cure for HIV. But it can be treated so that the immune system can take up to 20 years to progress to AIDS. The best form of treatment is called HAART (Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy). This is a combination of different types of ARV drugs that fight HIV in different ways and, taken together, helps prevent resistance to the drugs developing.

Q: What is ARV treatment?

A: Antiretroviral treatment for HIV infection consists of drugs that work against HIV infection itself by slowing down the replication of HIV in the body.