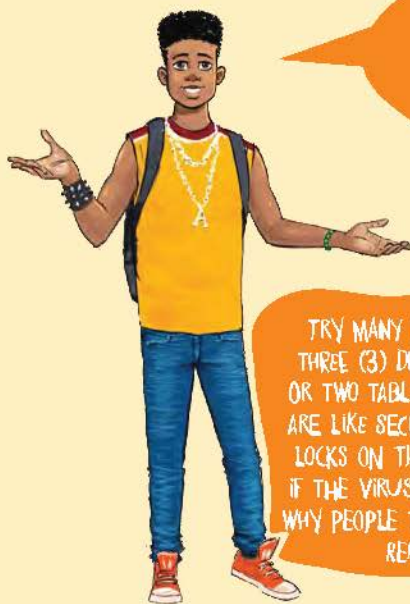


# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HIV TREATMENT

HIV has no cure, but there is effective treatment also known as Antiretroviral medicines (ARVs). What this means is that persons living with HIV need to take ARVs for the rest of their lives. This will control the virus in their bodies, strengthen their immune system and help them live longer.



LET ME EXPLAIN  
HOW THIS WORKS- ARVs ARE A  
COMBINATION OF 3 DIFFERENT KINDS OF MEDICINES  
THAT STOP THE VIRUS FROM INCREASING IN  
YOUR BODY.

ART = THREE  
DIFFERENT MEDS BECAUSE  
THE VIRUS IS SNEAKY AND WILL  
TRY MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO BEAT YOUR SYSTEM. THIS  
THREE (3) DIFFERENT MEDICINES ARE COMBINED INTO ONE  
OR TWO TABLETS A DAY THAT SHOULD BE SWALLOWED. THEY  
ARE LIKE SECURITY SYSTEM FOR YOUR HOUSE THAT INCLUDES  
LOCKS ON THE DOORS, AN ALARM AND A SECURITY GUARD. EVEN  
IF THE VIRUS GETS PAST ONE, THE OTHER TWO WILL STOP IT. THIS IS  
WHY PEOPLE THAT TAKE THEIR MEDICATION PROPERLY STAY HEALTHY -  
REMEMBER MAGIC JOHNSON?



With ARVs, millions of people who are HIV positive around the world, including young people are leading healthy and normal lives. They contribute tremendously to their society's development and record great success personally or professionally. Many of them have lived for more than 30 years with the HIV virus.

## HIV MEDICINES CAN ONLY WORK EFFECTIVELY, IF YOU DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Begin treatment once you test positive for HIV, as advised by the healthcare provider.

- **ADHERENCE:** Take your ARVs in the correct quantity, at the correct time, every day as directed by your healthcare provider. Do not skip or throw away your medicines – because the more you do so, the harder it becomes for the ARVs to control the virus in your body and keep you healthy.

- If you start to notice strange reactions (side effects), like rashes, vomiting, running stomach, poor sleep patterns, etc. because of the medicines, speak to your healthcare provider immediately.

- Eat a balanced diet, ensure to get adequate rest and exercise regularly.
- Join an HIV/AIDS support group for young people: being part of a support group, makes you part of a family that can inspire you, cheer you and guide you about living with the virus.

- If you are not already part of a support group, talk to your healthcare provider.

- If you are in a boarding school, travelling for camp retreats or School trips make sure you take your HIV medicines with you, so you don't miss your dosage.
- Factors like alcohol, drug abuse, unprotected sex, and lack of family or community support can affect the success of your treatment and make it difficult for you to stay on treatment.

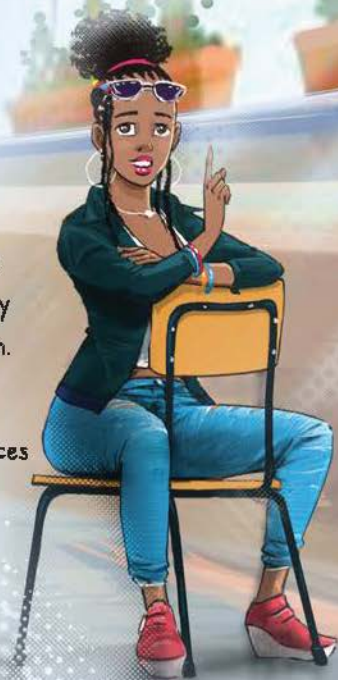


- **OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS (OIs):** These are other illnesses that can happen because of the body's weak immune systems like Tuberculosis (TB), Meningitis, Skin diseases, Hepatitis B and C, and Genital Herpes among others. You can reduce your risks of getting OIs by following your treatment strictly.

- **Tuberculosis (TB):** This is the most common opportunistic infection that affects people living with HIV.
- It affects the lungs and can be spread through the air if someone who has untreated TB coughs, sneezes, laughs, or talks.
- TB can be treated and cured, if it is discovered very early. So if you notice any symptoms of TB go to the nearest Healthcentre immediately.
- TB can lead to death if it is not treated.
- **You may have TB, if you notice the following:**
  - ▶ Continuous cough that has lasted for more than 2 weeks
  - ▶ Sweating at night while sleeping
  - ▶ You are always tired
  - ▶ Losing weight without planning to

- **DISCLOSURE:** The fastest way to get support if you are HIV positive is to talk to someone you trust about it. Disclosing ones HIV status can be very difficult for many because they fear people might reject and mistreat them. However, disclosing your HIV status has some benefits:

- It makes it easier for you to access medical services and the necessary support you need within and outside the Healthcentre.
- It reduces the risk of you infecting others.
- It removes the fear and burden of keeping your status a secret and coping with it alone.
- It enables you to fight against stigma and encourages communities to do the same.



- Generally, disclosure improves your confidence, restores hope and equips you with abilities to cope with stigma and discrimination.
- Disclosure starts with you. Accept your status, appreciate who you are and be passionate about your life.

WHILE IT IS HELPFUL TO REVEAL YOUR STATUS, YOU SHOULD NEVER LET ANY ONE FORCE YOU TO DISCLOSE. WHEN YOU ARE READY, THE FOLLOWING TIPS WILL HELP YOU WITH THE PROCESS:

### FIND SOMEONE YOU CAN OPEN UP TO:

- Someone you are comfortable with and can trust e.g. a close friend, parent, teacher, guardian, family member, partner etc.
- Find the best time and place to talk to them to avoid distractions.
- Before you talk to them, have some information about HIV to share with them, and let them know that being HIV+ is not a death sentence.
- Find out how well they know about HIV and how they feel about People Living with HIV (PLHIV).
- You can consider seeking support from a healthcare provider/counselor/a person openly living with HIV to help guide the conversation.
- They may express shock, fear or act judgmental when you first tell them about your status, that is okay – give them sometime to think about it and accept it.

If you are in a relationship, encourage your partner to **GET TESTED**, and commit to practicing safer sex.



IF THEY LEAVE OR REJECT YOU AFTER YOU REVEAL YOUR STATUS, DON'T CRY YOUR HEART OUT. HOLD YOUR HEAD UP HIGH AND MOVE ON. BETTER AND SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE WILL COME INTO YOUR LIFE AND STAY.