

TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

Your body can be strong and healthy if you take your ARVs correctly and take care of yourself. Looking after your body means you should:

- Recognise your strength and your ability to live with HIV with the help of ARVs.
- Take your ARVs and any other medication given to you at the clinic.
- Go for all follow-up clinic visits.
- Go for regular tests to make sure that your CD4 count is high and your viral load is suppressed.
- Eat healthy food and drink lots of water.
- Get plenty of exercise.
- Get enough rest, relaxation and sleep. Teenagers need 8 – 10 hours of sleep a day.

If you feel sick or notice anything wrong with your body, visit the clinic as soon as you can.

LIVING YOUR LIFE TO THE FULL

HIV does not need to hold you back from enjoying life. Like any other young person, you can:

- Go out and do fun things with friends.
- Study and pursue your dream career.
- Have a relationship with someone you like.

HAVING SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

If you are thinking of having sex, you need to:

- Have sexual relationships with people who you trust and feel safe with.
- Think about how you might tell a person you want to have sex with that you have HIV.
- Always use a condom consistently and correctly when you have sex.

AVOIDING OTHER RISKS

Using tobacco, alcohol and drugs is risky for people living with HIV:

- Smoking can increase the risk of developing TB, cancer and other lung diseases if you are HIV positive.
- Using drugs and alcohol can affect your ability to make decisions about having safe sex or taking treatment and can have long-term effects on your mental health.
- Alcohol, drugs and ARVs all affect the liver. Using alcohol and other substances may increase the chance of having liver complications.

The 'Zenzele Living with HIV' publication range includes the following brochures:

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🧠	2 DISCLOSURE	🧠
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FINDING HELP AND SUPPORT

If you are living with HIV, you are not alone. You can get the help and support you need when you ask for it. Many organisations offer free calls to experienced counsellors who are available 24 hours a day.

AIDS Helpline 0800 012 322
 Gender-based Violence Command Centre 0800 428 428
 Lifeline Counselling Line 0861 322 322
 Suicide Crisis Line 0800 567 567
 Childline (under 17) 0800 055 555
 Substance Abuse Line 0800 12 13 14
 Momconnect *134*550#

If you are looking for HIV support services in any part of South Africa, visit www.healthsites.org.za to find a support group in your area.

To find a Facebook support group, visit [BrothersforlifeSA](https://www.brothersforlifeSA) or [ZAZI](https://www.zazi.org.za). You can also visit www.brothersforlife.mobi or www.zazi.org.za

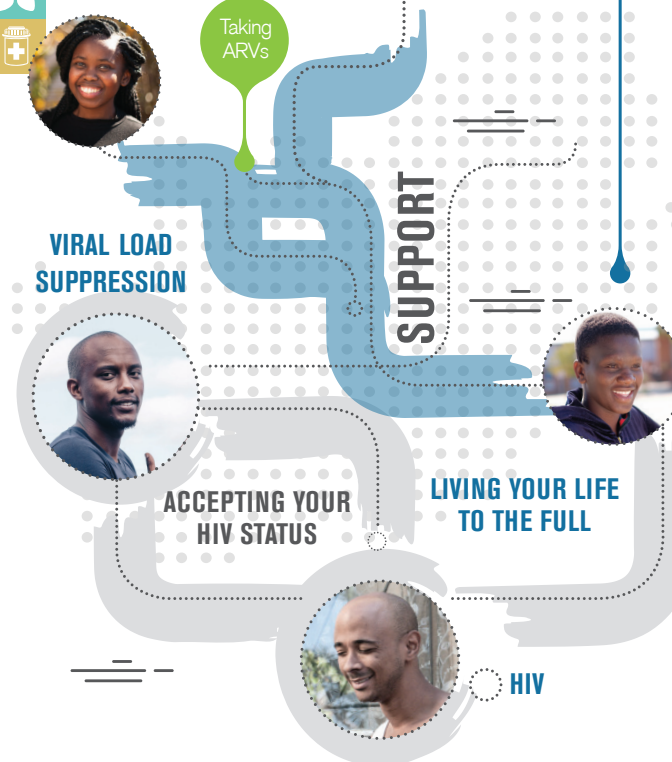
You can find more information on living with HIV in other brochures in the Zenzele series.



ADOLESCENTS AND HIV

7 LIVING WITH HIV: HEALTHY TEENS

Adhere to ARVs



VIRAL LOAD SUPPRESSION

SUPPORT

ACCEPTING YOUR HIV STATUS

LIVING YOUR LIFE TO THE FULL

HIV



ATTACKS
CD4 CELLS



HIV IN THE BODY

HIV is a virus that weakens the immune system, which protects your body against infection and disease. When your immune system is weak, your body cannot fight infections and diseases. If HIV is not treated with ARVs, you can get a collection of diseases called Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

IMMUNE SYSTEM IS WEAKENED



GETTING TREATMENT FOR HIV

Antiretroviral treatment (ARVs) are medications that are the only way to control HIV. Adherence – taking ARVs as told by a healthcare worker – reduces the amount of HIV in the body: the CD4 count goes up and the immune system recovers. This is called viral suppression. This does not mean HIV has been cured, it means there is only a small amount of HIV in the blood, that you will enjoy better health, and that there is less chance of transmitting HIV to somebody else.

VIRAL SUPPRESSION

ACCEPTING YOUR HIV STATUS

Some young people struggle to come to terms with having HIV. You need to understand that HIV is real, the tests are accurate, and if you have HIV, taking ARVs will help you stay healthy.

This pamphlet was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number GH001932-04 from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Its content are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human services, or the U/S government.



"I was 14 years old, at a school trip when I first found out about my status. I honestly did not understand how I had gotten the virus because it never even dawned on me that maybe my parents could have passed on because of HIV/AIDS. So I just pushed the whole HIV thing to the back of my mind."

ADOLESCENTS

Sadie Brown



TAKING ARVs

Because young people with HIV are still growing, the type and strength of ARVs is based on your weight, or stage of development. Your healthcare worker will decide what is best for you. Some young people find it difficult to adjust when they are moved from the paediatric regime of ARVs, used for children, to an adult regime. Talk to your healthcare worker if you are having any problems with your ARVs. Once you start treatment, you must adhere to your ARVs, which means taking your ARVs as the healthcare worker has told you to, every day, without missing a dose or stopping, even if you feel better.

Adhering to your treatment leads to viral load suppression, which means you can enjoy:

- Better health;
- A better quality of life;
- Less chance of transmitting HIV to a sexual partner;
- Being able to have HIV-negative children; and
- A long and healthy life.

TAKING YOUR TREATMENT CORRECTLY

To make sure you take your treatment correctly and reach viral suppression you should:

- Find out as much as possible about HIV by reading or talking to others.
- Talk to your healthcare worker about your treatment and any problems you have taking your ARVs.
- Get support from an adult you trust to help you understand what it means to be HIV positive and help you take your ARVs.
- Develop a routine for taking your pills at the same time every day.
- Set an alarm or reminder on your cell phone and take your ARVs when it goes off.
- Join a teen club or support group for young people living with HIV.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR FEELINGS

Knowing that you have HIV may make you feel confused, angry, or sad, and you may have questions about where it came from and what your future will hold. Dealing with these feelings can be difficult, and it may take time to feel comfortable about what having HIV means for you.

Looking after your feelings means you should:

- Work out what feelings you are going through.
- Accept what you are feeling and remind yourself that it is okay to feel that way.
- Express what you are feeling by talking to somebody you trust or writing down or drawing how you feel.
- Try to work out what is causing any bad feelings, and what may make you feel better.
- Think of a healthy way to take care of yourself like resting, taking a walk, listening to music or asking for a hug.
- Ask for professional help at the clinic if you are feeling that you cannot cope.