

MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

When you find out that you have HIV you might have worries about how it will affect your life and your future.

Different things that upset you may come and go at different points in your journey with HIV.

Find somebody you trust to talk to about how you are feeling or find a support group of other people who have similar experiences.

Ask for professional help at the clinic if you feel you are not coping.

AVOIDING OTHER HEALTH 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.

DOING MORE EXERCISE

Regular exercise can have positive health benefits and will help you to feel stronger, boost your immune system, manage stress and help you to cope with the side effects of ARVs.

Find a way to build exercise into your daily routine by doing simple, everyday things to keep active. Choose a fun exercise activity that suits your lifestyle.

GETTING ENOUGH REST

Rest, relaxation and sleep are important for everyone. If you are living with HIV you need to rest to allow your immune system to build up strength, so that you have the energy to deal with the challenges of each day.

Adults should get 7 – 9 hours of sleep a day. Try to establish a routine and go to bed at the same time each night.

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

+/	1 TREATMENT	+/
🧠	2 DISCLOSURE	🧠
🕒	3 ADHERENCE	🕒
👤	4 PMTCT	👤
❤️	5 LOVE AND SEX	❤️
🍃	6 NUTRITION AND LIFESTYLE	🍃
👧	7 ADOLESCENTS AND HIV	👧
👴	8 AGEING WITH HIV	👴
🫁	9 UNDERSTANDING TB	🫁
🏠	10 WELCOME BACK	🏠

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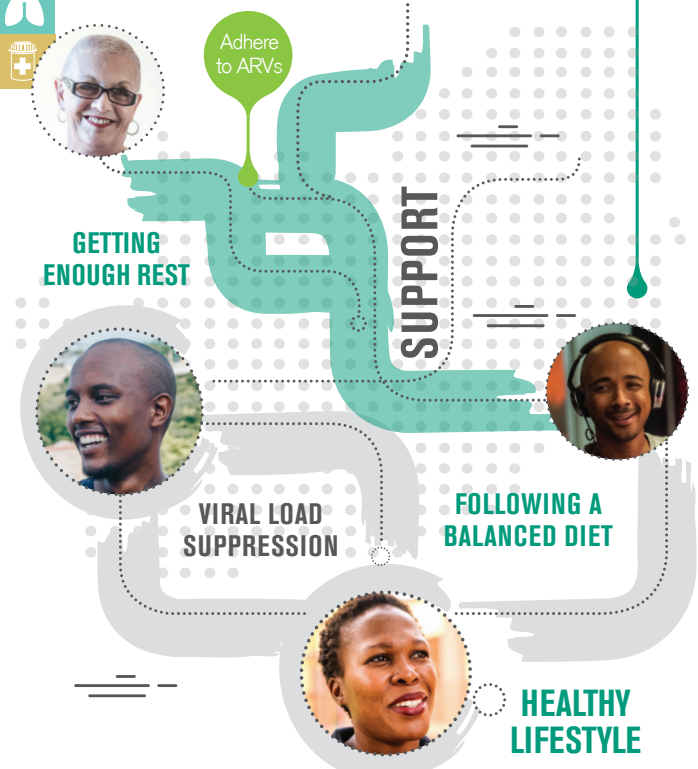
If you are looking for HIV support services in any part of South Africa, visit www.healthsites.org.za to find a support group in your area.

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.

NUTRITION AND LIFESTYLE

6 LIVING WITH HIV: STAYING HEALTHY AND HAPPY



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



LIVING HEALTHILY WITH HIV

The best way to stay healthy if you have HIV is by testing and starting treatment as soon as possible, rather than waiting to get sick or have symptoms. Talk to your healthcare worker to find out which treatment plan will be best for you, how to get support and how to manage any side effects, so that you are able to take the treatment correctly for the rest of your life.

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“Living well means having the right mindset and attitude, eating healthy, the right lifestyle, and taking your medication, always taking your ARVs.”

Cindy Pivacic



ADHERING TO ARVs

Once you start taking ARVs you must take them every day at the same time. It is a lifelong commitment. It is important not to skip or stop taking ARVs, even for one day.

You must always go for clinic follow-up visits and collect your ARVs on time, so you don't run out. Missing or stopping your ARVs can lead to drug resistance, where the treatment no longer works to control HIV.

TREATING INFECTIONS

You may suffer from opportunistic infections related to HIV, side effects from taking ARVs or other common infections.

If you get sick, tell your healthcare worker as soon as possible and get treatment. With treatment, most infections can be cured successfully.

CHOOSING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

For people living with HIV, a healthy lifestyle is the same as it is for anyone else. It involves:

- Eating a balanced diet;
- Getting regular exercise;
- Getting enough rest;
- Taking care of your mental and emotional well-being; and
- Regular hand washing with soap and water.

Choosing a healthy lifestyle will help you to:

- Process ARVs and manage any side effects.
- Keep your immune system stronger so that it can fight infections and disease better.
- Lower your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancers and hypertension.
- Reach and stay at a healthy weight.
- Always ask your healthcare worker to take your weight during clinic visits.

FOLLOWING A BALANCED DIET

Making healthy food and drink choices can make you feel better and have more energy. Healthy eating means having a balanced diet of basic, fresh low fat and high fibre foods.

If you find that taking ARVs makes you feel nauseous or make it hard to eat, talk to your community health worker, a healthcare worker or a dietician.

