

Take action to **stay healthy.**

Your doctor has made a diagnosis. Here's some information to help you stay as healthy as possible. Let's start with the basics.

What is HIV?

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS. It destroys specific cells that are part of the immune system. These cells, called CD4 cells or T-cells, help the body fight infection and disease. A person who is infected with HIV may feel and appear healthy for some time. During this time, though, the virus is destroying T-cells. When the amount of T-cells is too low, the person is likely to get sick. He/she is then said to have acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

How serious is HIV?

HIV is a serious infection. Unlike other viruses, a person with HIV cannot completely get rid of the virus. If untreated, the virus leads to AIDS. A person with AIDS might have serious infections or heart, kidney, and liver disease. Certain cancers are also linked to AIDS. But treatment can control the virus and prevent the damage. So a person who has HIV and gets treated can live for decades and remain in good health.

How is HIV treated?

HIV is treated using antiretroviral therapy (ART). ART usually includes 3 drugs. These 3 drugs attack the virus in at least 2 different ways. This is important because 1 drug cannot control the virus by itself. Your doctor will select the 3 drugs for you. Then he/she will monitor you regularly to see how they are working.

How can the lab help?

Laboratory tests help doctors make better decisions for people with HIV. Here are some of the most commonly performed tests:

- **Lymphocyte Subset Test:** This test measures the number of T-cells. Doctors use this number to decide when to start ART. They also use it to decide when to take action to prevent infections.

- **HIV-1 Viral Load Test:** This test measures the amount of virus in the blood. Doctors use this number to find out if the treatment is controlling the virus. It helps them know when they need to change a person's ART.
- **HIV-1 Drug Resistance Test:** This test finds out if the virus is responding to a drug. If it's not, the virus is said to be resistant to that drug. Resistance is one of the causes of ART failure. The test results can also help the doctor select a different drug to use.
- **Blood Count, Basic Chemistry, Glucose, and Lipid Tests:** Both HIV and the drugs used to treat it can have side effects on the body. Doctors use these tests to find out which side effects you have and how bad they are. Once the doctor knows about the side effects, he/she can help you manage them.

How can I stay healthy longer?

The first thing is to take your drugs when and how your doctor told you to. The second thing is to keep your body strong so it can fight the infection. So you'll need to have a healthy lifestyle—no smoking, exercise often, eat a healthy diet. There are also support groups you can join to help you cope.

Where can I find helpful resources?

The MyQuest™ by Care360® website has tools to help you manage your health.

- Get easy to understand test results sent to your computer, tablet, or smart phone. You can view or securely share your health information wherever you go. Download the MyQuest mobile app today.
- Find one of our 2,200 conveniently located Patient Service Centers. Schedule an appointment while online—no need to call us.
- Visit QuestDiagnostics.com/MyQuest for these and other tools.

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