



THE NILE EXPLORER BUS
HEALTH & SAFE SPACES COMPONENT:

HIV/AIDS TALK



Young Boys & Girls attending a training session on HIV/AIDS and its prevention.

HIV/AIDS

The session on HIV/ AIDS will enable the trainer, teachers, and/or volunteers to share information on what HIV/AIDS is, highlighting the various modes of transmission, debunking Myths & misconceptions surrounding HIV/AIDS in school and communities implore behavior change communication through age-appropriate key messages, ART adherence, and Positive living. All information on HIV/AIDS can be accessed from HIV.gov

What is HIV/AIDS?

HIV (*human immunodeficiency virus*) is a virus that attacks cells that help the body fight infection, making a person more vulnerable to other infections and diseases. It is spread by contact with certain bodily fluids of a person with HIV, most commonly during unprotected sex (sex without a condom or HIV medicine to prevent or treat HIV), or through sharing injection drug equipment.

If left untreated, HIV can lead to the disease AIDS (*acquired immunodeficiency syndrome*). The human body can't get rid of HIV and no effective HIV cure exists. So, once you have HIV, you have it for life.

However, by taking HIV medicine (called antiretroviral therapy or ART), people with HIV can live long and healthy lives and [prevent transmitting HIV](#) to their sexual partners. In addition, there are effective methods to prevent getting HIV through sex or drug use, including [pre-exposure prophylaxis \(PrEP\)](#) and [post-exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\)](#). *First identified in 1981, HIV is the cause of one of humanity's deadliest and most persistent epidemics.*

What Is AIDS?

AIDS is the late [stage of HIV infection](#) that occurs when the body's immune system is badly damaged because of the virus. Most people with HIV do not develop AIDS because taking HIV medicine every day as prescribed stops the progression of the disease. A person with HIV is considered to have progressed to AIDS when:

- the number of their CD4 cells falls below 200 cells per cubic millimeter of blood (200 cells/mm³). (In someone with a healthy immune system, CD4 counts are between 500 and 1,600 cells/mm³.) OR

- they develop one or more [opportunistic infections](#) regardless of their CD4 count.

Without HIV medicine, people with AIDS typically survive about 3 years. Once someone has a dangerous opportunistic illness, life expectancy without treatment falls to about 1 year. HIV medicine can still help people at this stage of HIV infection, and it can even be lifesaving. But people who start ART soon after they get HIV, experience more benefits—that’s why HIV testing is very important.

How Do I Know If I Have HIV?

The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get tested. Testing is relatively simple and can be conducted at any health facility where a health care provider can take the test.

Ways HIV Cannot Be Spread

HIV is **not** spread by:

- Air or water
 - Mosquitoes, ticks or other insects
 - Saliva, tears, or sweat that is not mixed with the blood of a person with HIV
 - Shaking hands; hugging; sharing toilets; sharing dishes, silverware, or drinking glasses; or engaging in closed-mouth or “social” kissing with a person with HIV.
 - Shared water sources/ drinking fountains
 - Other sexual activities that don’t involve the exchange of body fluids (for example, touching). HIV can’t be passed through healthy, unbroken skin.
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How Can You Help Someone Who Has Been Newly Diagnosed with HIV? (for teachers and close student peers)

There are many things that you can do to help a friend or loved one who has been recently diagnosed with HIV:

- **Talk.** Be available to have open, honest conversations about HIV. Follow the lead of the person who is diagnosed with HIV.
- **Listen.** Being diagnosed with HIV is life-changing news. Listen to your loved one and offer your support. Reassure them that HIV is a manageable health condition. There are medicines that can treat HIV and help them stay healthy.
- **Learn.** Educate yourself about HIV: what it is, how it is transmitted, how it is treated, and how people can stay healthy while living with HIV. Having a solid understanding of HIV is a big step forward in supporting your loved one.
- **Encourage treatment.** Some people who are recently diagnosed may find it hard to take that first step to HIV treatment. Your support and assistance may be helpful. By getting linked to HIV medical care early, starting [treatment with HIV medication](#) (called antiretroviral therapy or ART), adhering to medication, and staying in care, people with HIV can keep the virus under control, and prevent their HIV infection from progressing to AIDS.
- **Support medication adherence.** It is important for people living with HIV to take their HIV medication every day, exactly as prescribed. Ask your loved one what you can do to support them in establishing a medication routine and sticking to it. Also ask what other needs they might have and how you can help them stay healthy. Learn more about [treatment adherence](#).
- **Get support.** Take care of yourself and get support if you need it. Turn to others for any questions, concerns, or anxieties you may have so that the person who is diagnosed can focus on taking care of their own health.

If you are the sexual partner of someone who has been diagnosed with HIV, you should also get tested so that you know your own HIV status. If you test negative, talk to your healthcare provider about [PrEP](#) (pre-exposure prophylaxis), taking HIV medicine daily to prevent HIV infection.

What If a Friend Tells You That They Have HIV?

- **Acknowledge.** If someone has disclosed their HIV status to you, thank them for trusting you with their private health information.
- **Ask.** If appropriate, ask if there's anything that you can do to help them. One reason they may have chosen to disclose their status to you is that they need an ally or advocate, or they may need help with a particular issue or challenge.
- **Reassure.** Let the person know, through your words or actions, that their HIV status does not change your relationship and that you will keep this information private if they want you to.
- **Learn.** Educate yourself about HIV. Today, lots of people living with HIV are on ART and have the virus under control. Others are at different stages of treatment and care. Don't make assumptions and look to your friend for guidance.

Prevention of HIV/AIDS

1. Reinforce abstinence as the surest way to avoid acquiring HIV/AIDS.
2. Encourage students to take frequent HIV tests and discuss other methods of preventing transmission of HIV such as condom use on a needs basis.
3. Introduce the concept of PEP in cases of sexual assault in school.

Factors affecting adherence to ART & Positive living

- Stigma (both internal and external sources; media, community and health personnel.)
- Poor diet in school.
- Inconsistent timing of taking medication while in school.
- Pill Burden.
- Lack of Psychosocial support

Positive Living

What is positive living all about?

1. Viral Load suppression (Adherence to ART)
2. Good Nutrition and healthy eating habits.
3. Confidence and having a positive outlook on life.
4. Avoiding re-infection.

Resources and Reading material

- a. HIV.gov
- b. Strategy for Accelerating HIV/AIDS Epidemic Control (2017-2020)

