



# Common myths about HIV and AIDS



HIV management has come a long way over the years, but there's still a lot of stigma and misunderstanding surrounding the virus and those who live with it. Below, we debunk some common myths about HIV and AIDS and provide facts to help build understanding and empathy.



**Myth:** Only LGBTQ+ people contract HIV.

**Truth:** HIV can be contracted by anyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Myth:** If you are HIV positive, you will eventually get AIDS.

**Truth:** While it's true that untreated HIV can progress to AIDS, antiretroviral therapy (ART) stops the virus from replicating and can reduce the levels of HIV in the body to such a low level that they are undetectable.

**Myth:** Women who are HIV positive will always give birth to babies who are HIV positive.

**Truth:** HIV can be transmitted from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, labour, delivery, or breastfeeding. However, with the right treatment, medical care, and considerations, an HIV-positive woman can have a baby who is HIV-negative.

**Myth:** You don't need to use a condom if you, or your partner, is taking PrEP.

**Truth:** PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a medication used to prevent HIV infection in people who are at high risk of getting the virus. It works by preventing HIV from establishing itself and spreading in the body. While PrEP is highly effective at preventing HIV, it's still important to use condoms to protect against other STIs (sexually transmitted infections) like herpes, gonorrhoea, and syphilis.

**Myth:** HIV can be spread through hugging.

**Truth:** You can't get HIV from hugging. The virus is only spread through direct contact with certain bodily fluids from someone with HIV: blood, semen, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids, and breast milk.

**Myth:** People with HIV cannot have relationships.

**Truth:** People living with HIV absolutely can have healthy, loving relationships, whether their partner is HIV-negative or HIV-positive. Thanks to modern medicine, someone on effective treatment who has an undetectable viral load poses almost zero risk of sexually transmitting the virus.

**Myth:** Being HIV positive means your life is over.

**Truth:** Being HIV positive does not mean your life is over. Advances in treatment mean that, with the right treatment, many people with HIV live long, healthy lives.



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