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# Truths About HIV and Women

*Last updated: June 23, 2026*

*Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.*

#onewomanatatime

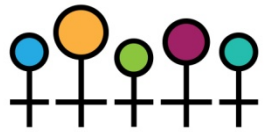
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# The Truth About HIV

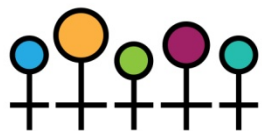
- HIV is a health condition
  - Drugs widely available to treat it; these drugs are also part of preventing transmission to others
- Most people living with HIV worldwide acquired it through sexual contact or injecting drugs
  - Stigmatized in society; can come with pre-existing unfair judgments
- Unduly affects communities whose members experience stigma because of who they are
  - E.g., Black and brown people, people living in poverty, people of transgender experience, and more



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# The Truth About HIV

- *Stigma*: an attitude or belief held about a person or group that discredits or shames them
  - Part of shaming them is **telling stories about them that are not true**
- These reasons + so little information and so much fear surrounding HIV in its earliest days may contribute to why so many myths about HIV persist

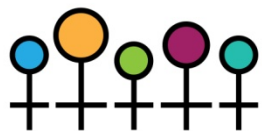


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# The Truth About HIV

- *Myth*: a story or an idea that is **not true**
- There is now plenty of accurate, true information about HIV
  - Decades of research
- Important to tell truth from myth!
- Believing HIV myths can result in:
  - Fear
  - Denial
  - Potential damage to your health





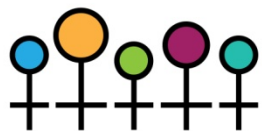
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# Truths About HIV and Its Treatment

## **The Truth:**

*HIV is the virus that leads to AIDS.*

HIV (the human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that occurs in nature. AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV. Because so little was known about AIDS in the epidemic's earliest days, ideas spread about where it came from that were later proven untrue.



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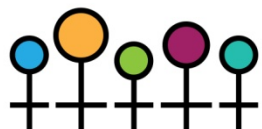
# Truths About HIV and Its Treatment

## **The Truth:**

*You can live a long,  
full life with HIV.*

With **access to effective HIV drugs** and resources to take good care of other aspects of their health, people living with HIV can live as long as a similar person who is not living with HIV.

This is why it is so crucial for everyone worldwide who needs HIV treatment and care to be able to get it – and why threats to HIV treatment access can be so devastating.



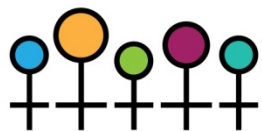
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# Truths About HIV and Its Treatment

## The Truth:

*HIV does not have a cure.*

- A few people appear to have been cured of HIV under special experimental circumstances
- Currently no available cure for HIV
- Significant global advocacy and research to find a cure
- Learn more:
  - [Finding a Cure for HIV](#)
  - [HIV Cure Cases and Cure-Related Research Strategies](#)



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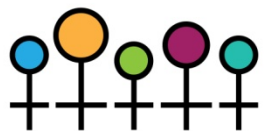
# Truths About HIV and Its Treatment

## **The Truth:**

*HIV drugs are powerful – and good at keeping people healthy.*

HIV drugs can help keep people healthy for many years. They may also cause *side effects*.

Older HIV drugs were known for having serious, often unbearable side effects. Newer HIV medications have very few side effects and are easier to take.



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# Truths About HIV Testing and Transmission

## **The Truth:**

*People living with HIV look just like people who are not living with HIV.*

Often, people living with HIV do not look or feel sick.

Taking an HIV test is the only way to know if you are living with HIV. It is impossible to know whether another person is living with HIV – unless they choose to [disclose](#) to you that they are living with HIV.



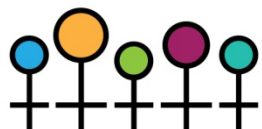
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# Truths About HIV Testing and Transmission

## The Truth:

*There are only a few specific ways people may come in contact with HIV.*

HIV is only transmitted between people through fluids – blood, semen (pre-cum and cum), vaginal or anal fluids, and breast milk – that contain HIV. Tears, sweat, mosquitoes, pools, sharing dishes or silverware, spitting on someone, and other forms of casual contact **cannot possibly transmit HIV**. Period.



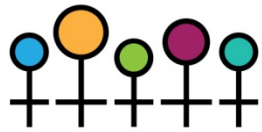
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# Truths About HIV Testing and Transmission

## The Truth:

*There are tools available to help people stay HIV-negative.*

- Condoms – one of the most effective ways of preventing transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- [PrEP](#) (pre-exposure prophylaxis)
- Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U) – person living with HIV **cannot transmit HIV** to a partner when taking HIV drugs with an undetectable viral load (not enough HIV in their bloodstream for a test to measure)



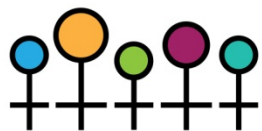
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# Truths About HIV and Overall Health

## **The Truth:**

*Older adults have sex!*

Age does not protect you from acquiring HIV. In fact, UNAIDS estimates that 4.2 million people age 50 and over are living with HIV worldwide. Unfortunately, older adults are frequently ignored in discussions about HIV prevention and care and so do not know that they may be vulnerable to HIV.



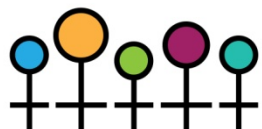
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# Truths About HIV and Overall Health

## **The Truth:**

*People living with HIV can give birth to – and breast/chestfeed – babies who remain HIV-negative.*

Advances in HIV treatment have dramatically lowered the chances that a birthing parent will pass HIV on to their baby. Research has proven that if the birthing parent takes HIV drugs as prescribed and has a low viral load, the chances of transmitting HIV to the baby during pregnancy, birth, and/or breast/chestfeeding can be less than one in 100.



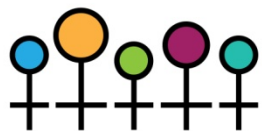
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# Truths About HIV and Overall Health

## The Truth:

*Keeping healthy is (in part) about bodies and organs.*

- Women across the gender spectrum have a range of body parts that need care.
  - E.g., most cisgender women have a uterus; most transgender women have a prostate
- Important to get screened based on your anatomy
  - E.g., GYN care = screening and treating mainly people with a vagina, cervix, uterus, and/or ovaries; includes people who identify as transmasculine



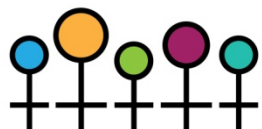
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# Truths About HIV and Overall Health

## The Truth:

*HIV is an STI – and there are other STIs that also matter.*

- Even though U=U, it is still important to take steps to prevent other STIs
  - Including sex among partners who are all living with HIV
- For those who are HIV-negative, multiple or untreated STIs contribute to and increase vulnerability to HIV
- Safer sex reduces your chances of getting many STIs
- Most STIs can be cured or managed with treatment



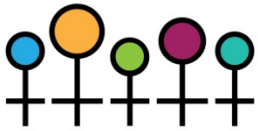
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# Truths About HIV and Overall Health

**The Truth:**

***Pleasure is a right!***

- ***All women living with HIV across the gender spectrum deserve to have full, satisfying sexual lives***
- Ability to have pleasurable, safe sexual experiences if you choose has been declared to be a central part of health and wellbeing by the World Health Organization
- Sexual pleasure feels good *and* can be good for you – may:
  - lower stress
  - improve sleep
  - increase levels of oxytocin



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## Learn More!

- To learn more about this topic, and for links to articles featuring more details, please read the full fact sheet on this topic:
  - [Truths About HIV and Women](#)
- For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:
  - [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)
  - [thewellprojecthiv.bsky.social](https://thewellprojecthiv.bsky.social)
  - [www.facebook.com/thewellproject](https://www.facebook.com/thewellproject)
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