

How testing and treatment can stop HIV.
Information for gay and bisexual men.

**IT STARTS
WITH
ME**

*new era
new hope*

We're living in a new era.
We now know for sure:
**treatment stops HIV
being passed on.**

We can dramatically cut
new infections if we:

TEST

TREAT

PROTECT

TAKE

ACTION



It makes sense
to test.

Test

Testing is good for YOU

Test positive and you can get treatment that offers you the chance of a long and healthy life. Test and start treatment early and you can expect a close to normal lifespan. The outlook is less good if you test late, after HIV has damaged your immune system.

Testing is good for ALL OF US Eight out of 10* gay men who get HIV get it from a man who doesn't realise he has it. Once they've tested, guys who didn't know they had HIV can then take steps to protect others, and get the treatment they need. HIV drugs make people less infectious, so can cut new infections too.

Do it regularly If we all test once a year we could dramatically cut the numbers who pass on HIV without realising. Once a year may not be enough, eg, you should test soon after unprotected anal sex.

Testing is now much easier. It's free, confidential, simple and fast. You can now even do it at home with a postal test.

*Health Protection Agency, 2012.

TREAT

HIV drugs stop the virus reproducing. This means:

- HIV no longer attacks the body. Treatment can keep it under control for a lifetime.
- The drugs can also make someone much less infectious.

Someone on treatment has an **extremely low risk** of passing on HIV if:

- Their viral load (how much HIV is in their blood) has been undetectable for six months.
- They are free from sexually transmitted infections.*

More testing means those with HIV get treated and the number of people who can pass on HIV gets smaller. So it's not just condoms that stop HIV – treatment can too.

*Viral load is how much HIV is in someone's body, measured by a blood test. When treatment is working it should drop so low that tests show it's at 'undetectable' levels. Untreated sexually transmitted infections can push it back up.



Really? I never
knew that!



Condoms mean
I don't have
to worry

Protect

Why use condoms if HIV drugs stop HIV?

Treatment alone won't stop HIV because:

- Thousands have HIV without knowing, so they aren't on treatment. Most new infections come from unprotected sex with them.
- Many people who know they have HIV are still infectious because they're not on treatment or their viral load isn't 'undetectable'.
- Condoms now come in a range of sizes and materials. For more sensation and a better experience try a variety so that you find a condom that's right for you and your partner.

Condoms are still the best barrier against HIV and they protect against other infections. Other things can reduce the risk of HIV, such as a monogamous relationship or sex with fewer people.

Take action You can make a difference – to your own life and the lives of others. It's up to you to make this happen by:

- Testing at least once a year
- Taking HIV treatment if you need it
- Protecting yourself, eg, with condoms
- Telling friends how – together with condoms – testing and treatment can save thousands of us from getting HIV.

Share **It Starts With Me** with your friends. Join us on Facebook, Twitter and at **startswithme.org.uk**.

We can change history. Help end the HIV epidemic right here, right now.

We can stop HIV. It starts with me.

StartsWithMe.org.uk

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I can
do that

This booklet was produced by **Terrence Higgins Trust** for **HIV Prevention England**, a partnership that includes the following organisations working with gay and bisexual men.



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