‘HIV’ and ‘AIDS’ are not the same thing. It is important and helpful to understand the difference between them.

HIV is a virus that infects the body and attacks the immune system. If HIV is left untreated it can cause a range of symptoms.

AIDS is used to describe a late stage of HIV infection, when a person’s immune system has been severely damaged by the virus. Taking HIV treatment means most people living with HIV won’t get AIDS.

Testing is the only way to know if you have HIV. Taking treatment helps keep HIV under control, which means people can live long and healthy lives.

Last full review:
03 July 2020
Next full review:
03 July 2023

What are HIV and AIDS?

HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system and leads to AIDS if it isn’t treated.

How HIV infects the body and the lifecycle of HIV

HIV attacks the CD4 cells in the immune system, stopping the body from fighting off illness.

Symptoms and stages of HIV infection

There are three stages of HIV infection, but many people only show symptoms in the final stage.
There is no cure for HIV or AIDS. Confused about the different terms when it comes to HIV and AIDS? Our glossary can help. Whatever your worries and fears about HIV and AIDS, we’re here to help.