

## TB AND HIV

If you are living with HIV and you have TB, you are said to be co-infected. TB is one of the most common diseases that affects people living with HIV. When your viral load is high and your immune system is weak, there is a very high chance of being infected with TB. But, if you start HIV treatment soon after testing HIV positive and adhere to your ARVs - your viral load will be suppressed and your immune system will be strong and health - your chances of being infected with TB can be reduced. Taking TB preventive treatment together with your ARVs will further reduce the risk of getting TB.

## DRUG RESISTANT TB (MDR-TB AND XDR-TB)

If you do not adhere to your treatment; missing or skipping doses, or not taking some of the prescribed medicine, the TB germs in your body will learn how to trick and escape the medicines used to treat TB and it will become resistant to treatment. This means the TB treatment will no longer work to kill the TB germs and you will develop Drug Resistant TB.

There are two types of drug resistant TB, multiple drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) and extensively drug resistant TB (XDR-TB). These are very dangerous types of TB and they can be passed on to other people. That is why more and more people are being infected with DR-TB.

It is very difficult to treat MDR-TB and XDR-TB, treatment can take nine months to two years, or even longer and it has more severe side effects. Adherence is important for treatment to be effective. Health care professionals have to decide whether LTBI treatment is required for high risk contacts of resistant TB patients.

## PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF TB

In order to reduce exposure to TB germs, the following actions should be taken whenever possible:

- Always open the windows in your house, in public buildings and public transport to allow the circulation of fresh air.
- Always cover your cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, a cloth. Avoid coughing into your hands. Always wash your hands if you cough into your hands.
- People infected with TB should:
  - Sleep alone, in a well aired room;
  - Wear a mask when they are around other people; and
  - Spend as little time as possible in places with large numbers of people.

The 'Zenzele Living with HIV' publication range includes the following brochures:

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## FINDING HELP AND SUPPORT

If you are living with HIV, you are not alone. You can get the help and support you need when you ask for it. Many organisations offer free calls to experienced counsellors who are available 24 hours a day.

AIDS Helpline 0800 012 322  
 Gender-based Violence Command Centre 0800 428 428  
 Lifeline Counselling Line 0861 322 322  
 Suicide Crisis Line 0800 567 567  
 Childline (under 17) 0800 055 555  
 Substance Abuse Line 0800 12 13 14  
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If you are looking for HIV support services in any part of South Africa, visit [www.healthsites.org.za](http://www.healthsites.org.za) to find a support group in your area.

To find a Facebook support group, visit [BrothersforlifeSA](https://www.facebook.com/BrothersforlifeSA) or ZAZI. You can also visit [www.brothersforlife.mobi](http://www.brothersforlife.mobi) or [www.zazi.org.za](http://www.zazi.org.za)

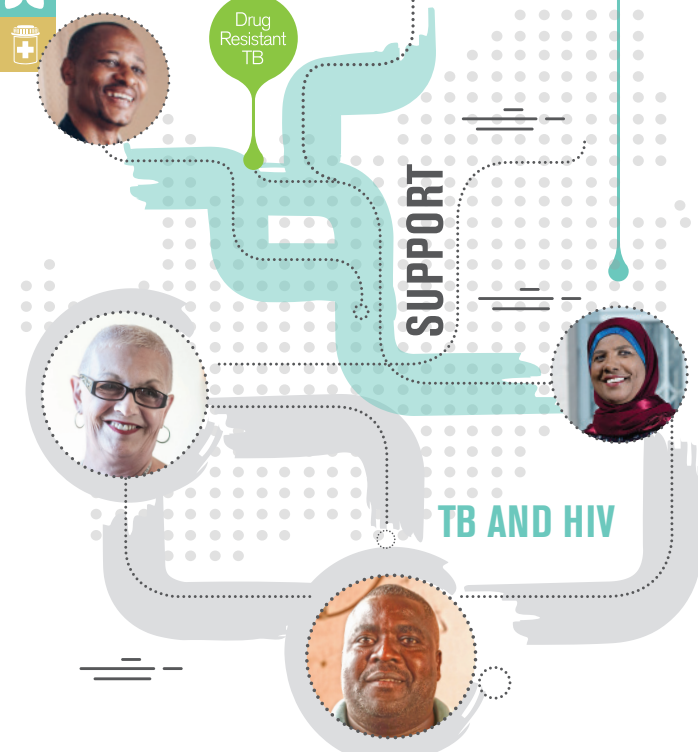
You can find more information on living with HIV in other brochures in the Zenzele series.

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# UNDERSTANDING TB

## 9 LIVING WITH HIV: UNDERSTANDING TB



## ATTACKS CD4 CELLS



## HIV IN THE BODY

HIV is a virus that weakens the immune system, which protects your body against infection and disease. When your immune system is weak, your body cannot fight infections and diseases. If HIV is not treated with ARVs, you can get a collection of diseases called Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

IMMUNE SYSTEM IS WEAKENED



## GETTING TREATMENT FOR HIV

Antiretroviral treatment (ARVs) are medications that are the only way to control HIV. Adherence – taking ARVs as told by a healthcare worker - reduces the amount of HIV in the body: the CD4 count goes up and the immune system recovers. This is called viral suppression. This does not mean HIV has been cured, it means there is only a small amount of HIV in the blood, that you will enjoy better health, and that there is less chance of transmitting HIV to somebody else.

VIRAL SUPPRESSION



## WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS?

Tuberculosis or TB as it is commonly called, is a disease caused by a bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* that enters the body through the air and usually affects the lungs. It is spread through the air when a person with TB sneezes, coughs, speaks, spits, or sings. Anyone who breathes in this air can get TB. It is a serious disease but it can be cured.

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At first I was taking TB medication and the HIV medication. I would get skin rashes.



It would be as if my skin was coming off. My feet were very itchy at the sole. I wasn't even able to wear shoes. When the pavement was burning hot, I wouldn't feel it at all and yet if I was to step on just a small stone, the pain would be unbearable. But I started to gain weight again. I started feeling like myself again. I had completed the TB medication but I carried on with the ARVs."



Thomas Mashego

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF TB INFECTION

The general sign and symptoms of TB include:

- Coughing that lasts three or more weeks and sometimes coughing up blood;
- Chest pains;
- Sudden weight loss;
- Feeling very tired;
- Fever;
- Sweating at night;
- Cold chills;
- No appetite.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU HAVE TB?

Not everybody who has been infected with TB has symptoms. To find out whether you have TB, you will need to have a test at the clinic. To test for TB, you will be asked to cough out a sputum/mucus which will be tested for TB germs in the laboratory. If TB germs are found in your sputum, you will start TB treatment. Sometimes an x-ray will be done to see if there is TB in the lungs.

## WHAT IS TB PREVENTIVE THERAPY AND WHY SHOULD I TAKE IT?

TB Preventive Therapy is the treatment taken by PLHIV to prevent development of TB disease. Taking TB preventive treatment will reduce the chances of developing active TB and falling sick. All People living with HIV are at a higher risk of developing active TB and should use TB preventive treatment as part of a full package of care under supervision of a health care professional.

## WHAT TB PREVENTIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

Isoniazid or INH has been the standard TB Preventive Therapy in South Africa. It works very well to prevent TB but it has to be taken daily for 6 to 12 months. It is always given with vitamin B6. There are new TB Preventive Therapy medicines in the market namely, 3HP, recommended as an alternative to INH for both adults and children. 3HP is taken once a week for 12 weeks. Isoniazid plus rifampicin for 3 months (3RH), is recommended for children and adolescents <15. Go to your nearest health care facility/clinic to start your TB preventive therapy.

## TB TREATMENT

TB can be treated and cured by taking a combination of antibiotics that kill the TB germs, for six to twelve months. This involves an intensive treatment regime for the first two months using four different medicines: isoniazid, rifampicin, pyrazinamide and ethambutol; and continued treatment for the next four months with isoniazid and ethambutol.

Your Healthcare worker will tell you how to take your TB treatment with your ARVs.

It is important to take your treatment as prescribed by the healthcare worker and to go for clinic follow-up visits. Even if you feel better once you start on the TB treatment, you need to finish your treatment course. Your Healthcare worker will tell you when you can stop treatment. Do not stop your treatment until your healthcare worker tells you to.

## SIDE EFFECTS OF TB TREATMENT

The TB treatment has some side-effects, but these usually go away in the first few weeks. Common side-effects of TB drugs are:

- Feeling like you want to vomit;
- Feeling dizzy;
- Skin rashes;
- Pins and needles or burning feeling in feet;
- Loss of appetite;
- Feeling like you have flu or a fever;
- If you are one of the few people who get yellow eyes or skin (jaundice); see a doctor right away.