

# Once You Test Positive - Know The Facts!

- AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is caused by the virus called HIV (Human immunodeficiency Virus). HIV attacks your immune system, reducing your ability to fight illnesses.
- As a PHA (Person who has AIDS), you are not alone. Roughly 65,000 Canadians are living with HIV/AIDS.
- There is no cure yet, but there are many medications that can help you lead a very productive life.
- This pamphlet has been created to assist you in becoming aware of the resources and support services available to help you get the facts to make informed decisions about your health.

## Be healthy and stay healthy

- Drink plenty of water.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Always take your medication at prescribed times (adherence is crucial).
- Avoid alcohol (it can affect the way your medications work).
- Try to eat healthy foods and exercise regularly.
- Always practice safer sex and needle use – even though you have tested positive you need to protect yourself from other strains of HIV and you need to protect others.
- For women, don't ignore your gynecological health.

## Keep Informed! You are in control

- Take an active role in your treatment (be a part of the decision making).
- Search out an HIV friendly family physician.
- Stay aware of the symptoms related to certain opportunistic infections.
- Learn about where you can access mental health services.
- Have open communication with your health care team.
- Educate yourself about non-traditional therapies.
- Learn about healthy eating and nutrition.
- Stay informed about new treatments and possible side effects.
- Keep a journal –tracking charts.
- Maintain written history of medications.
- Make a list of things you want to discuss with your doctor.



## Terms You will need to know

**Adherence** – taking medication at the specified times as prescribed.

**Non-Adherence** – missing doses, taking the incorrect amount or not following prescribed instructions such as taking medication with food or on an empty stomach if instructed to do so.

**Opportunistic Infections** – these are caused by bacteria, fungi and other viruses and usually affect HIV+ persons because their immune system is weaker and compromised.

**Toxicities** – toxins which sometimes cause side effects from your medication or other concerns.

**Viral Load** – the term refers to the amount of virus in your blood; the lower your viral load the better. You will also hear the term undetectable used when your viral load is below 50.

**Structured Treatment Interruption** – (STI) is a term used to describe an approach where treatment is stopped, with support from your physician for a planned period of time.

**Structured Intermittent Therapy** – (SIT) also known as “pulsed therapy” is a slight variation of a Structured Treatment Interrupter (STI), where therapy occurs in pre-planned intervals, with breaks in between.

**Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors** – These drugs inhibit (slow down or stop) the action of the reverse transcriptase enzyme.

**Protease Inhibitors** – These are a class of anti-HIV drugs that work by inhibiting (slowing down or stopping) the action of protease. When this enzyme can't do its work, HIV makes defective copies of itself, which cannot infect other cells.

### Excellent Reading

**Managing Your Health** – a guide for people living with HIV/AIDS; available from the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange.

**A practical guide to HIV Treatment.** Formerly known as HAART.

**Complimentary Therapies** – a practical guide to complimentary therapies for people living with HIV

**Herbal Therapies**

**Nutrition**

Available along with other information through [www.catie.ca](http://www.catie.ca) or by email at [info@catie.ca](mailto:info@catie.ca)

### Other Resources

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange – [www.catie.ca](http://www.catie.ca)

Northern AIDS Connection Society – [northernaidsconnectionsociety.ca](http://northernaidsconnectionsociety.ca)

Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre – [www.aidsida.cpha.ca](http://www.aidsida.cpha.ca)

Canadian AIDS Society – [www.cdnaids.ca](http://www.cdnaids.ca)

Canadian Treatment Action Council – [www.ctac.ca](http://www.ctac.ca)

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network – [www.caan.ca](http://www.caan.ca)

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network – [www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)

Project Inform – [www.projectinform.org/intro.html](http://www.projectinform.org/intro.html)

AIDSMeds.com – [www.aidsmeds.com](http://www.aidsmeds.com)

CWGHR – [www.hivandrehab.ca](http://www.hivandrehab.ca)



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