

### Key messages on Test & Start

Questions	Key messages
<p>1. What is “Universal Test &amp; Treat” or “Test &amp; Start”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New recommendation from WHO and national policy to provide Antiretroviral (ARV) treatment as soon as after HIV diagnosis so HIV infected people can maintain a long and healthy life.</li> <li>- <u>For Pre-ART pts with CD4 &gt; 500:</u> With Test &amp; Start, you don’t have to wait until your immune system gets weak; you can now start your treatment regardless of your CD4 count (that measures how strong your immune system is).</li> <li>- <u>For recently diagnosed pts:</u> With Test &amp; Start, you can now have access to the treatment against HIV as soon as after you are diagnosed with HIV; you don’t have to wait to be put on treatment until your immune system gets weak.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Take a HIV test to know your status and ask for your treatment NOW before your body becomes weak/before you get sick”</i></p> <p><i>“The sooner you know your HIV status and the sooner you start the treatment the healthier and the longer you will live”</i></p>
<p>2. What HIV does to your body?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Everybody has an immune system that fights off and protect us against different germs and infections we are exposed to every day.</li> <li>- When you are HIV infected, the virus attacks your immune system and it multiplies itself. Gradually, the amount of HIV in your body (called viral load) increases, your immune system becomes weak and eventually damaged, meaning your life is at risk because you get different infections that you cannot fight off.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Without ARV treatment, HIV will gradually damage your defences against infections and you will become sick”</i></p>
<p>3. How ARV treatment (ART) can help you?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To date although there is no cure for HIV we have the treatment that can control the multiplication of HIV in your body. Thanks to ART you can decrease the amount of viruses in your body (your viral load) to very low levels which helps your immune system remain strong to fight off different germs/infections.</li> <li>- For ART to be effective you need to take one or two pills every day and for life, like in most chronic conditions.</li> </ul> <p><i>“With ARV medication you can reduce the amount of HIV in your body and stop HIV from damaging your immune system which protects you from getting sick”</i></p>
<p>4. Why in the past HIV people did not put on treatment earlier?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Up to now we have providing ART soon after diagnosis to pregnant or lactating women tested HIV positive.</li> <li>- In the past, HIV infected people had to take many pills per day that often had unpleasant and long-term side effects. Nowadays, we have easier-to-take and safer treatment with less side effects and less number of pills to take per day (usually 1 pill/day).</li> <li>- We now have important new evidence that the earlier you know your status and the earlier you start and remain on ART the better for your health. With early diagnosis and initiation of treatment you can control the damage HIV can do your body, you can live longer and healthier.</li> </ul>
<p>5. What are the benefits of starting ART soon after HIV diagnosis?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The best time to start ART is soon after you are diagnosed while your immune system is still strong and you are healthy. Starting ART soon after HIV diagnosis and by taking your ARVs every day:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ You can stop HIV from making more viruses in your body, meaning your viral load will decrease</li> <li>○ Will protect you from getting sick as your immune system will not be attacked/damaged by HIV</li> <li>○ Will help you to live longer and healthier</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Will decrease the risk of transmitting HIV to your partner and to your baby (for pregnant/lactating women)</li> </ul>
6. What happens when you delay starting ART?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Your viral will be high as HIV keeps making more HIV in your body.</li> <li>- Your immune system will gradually become weak and eventually damaged. You will be more vulnerable to opportunistic infections, like TB; meaning, when you are exposed to mild and life-threatening infections your body will not be able to fight against them.</li> <li>- The risk to transmit HIV to your partner and to your baby (in case of pregnant/lactating woman) increases.</li> </ul>
7. What else is important to know about ART?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ART is a life-long treatment that needs to be taken every day as close to the same time as possible. If there is no ARV in your body every day, HIV will restart making more viruses in your body and your defences against the infections will become weak.</li> <li>- At the beginning it may seem difficult, but same as with other chronic conditions taking a life-long treatment will help you to stay healthy.</li> <li>- It is your right to have access to treatment as soon as after you have been diagnosed with HIV. Ask for your pills against HIV as soon as you are ready.</li> <li>- In some cases (such as when you are also diagnosed with TB) you can start your ART after you are put first on anti-TB treatment.</li> </ul>