

# RESPECT

Love. Life. Others.



## WHAT DO YOUR RESULTS MEAN FOR YOUR FUTURE?

### Now that you have been counselled and tested....

- ✓ You have taken the first step in taking care of your health and those you love by getting counseled and tested.
- ✓
- ✓ This leaflet will give you some helpful information if you have just received your results.
- ✓
- ✓ Remember, if you have any questions, talk to your counsellor.

### If your test result is **negative**...

This means that either:

1) right now you are not infected with the HIV virus

**OR**

2) you have been infected but it is too early to detect the virus.

It can take up to 3-6 months to test positive after being infected with HIV. This is called the "window period". So to be absolutely sure you are HIV negative, you should get re-tested in 3 months.

### **If you are not infected now, it does not mean you can not get HIV in the future. Take these steps to reduce your chances of getting the HIV virus:**

- ✓ Abstain from sex. Young people, consider waiting to have sex until you are more mature and know the HIV status of your partner.
- ✓ Be faithful to one uninfected person. If you have a wife or husband or long-time partner, be faithful to that one person. But remember that, even if your partner is not infected with HIV, it is always safer to use male or female condoms (contraceptive sheaths).
- ✓ Practice safe sex. This means that you should use a male or female condom correctly every time you have sex, even if it is with the same partner. If you have more than one partner, it is even more important to practice safe sex. Ask your counsellor to give you more information on

this.

- ✓ If you visit a traditional healer and a razor is used, make sure he or she uses a brand new razor.
- ✓ Ask your counsellor what else you can do to avoid being infected with HIV. Since your counsellor knows a little bit about your personal life, he or she can suggest ways to change your behaviour to prevent being infected with HIV.
- ✓ Get re-tested in 3 months to make sure you are negative.

## **If your test result is **positive**...**

This means that you have been infected with the HIV virus.

The HIV virus attacks your body's defense system, which fights infections in your body. Thus, it is very important to avoid infections and keep your body healthy.

This also means that you should avoid being re-infected with the HIV virus. The more times you have unprotected sex with an infected partner, the more you get re-infected and the harder it is for your body to fight infections. You should, therefore, either abstain from sex or use male or female condoms correctly each time you have sex.

**NOTE: Testing positive for HIV does not mean you have AIDS.**

## **Here are some suggestions that may help you:**

- ✓ When you first find out that you are positive, you may feel many different emotions. You may feel depressed, you may be in shock and not want to believe it, or you may feel angry. These feelings are normal. Keep in mind that, with time, the intensity of these feelings will go down.
- ✓ "I thought it was a mistake - I did not want to believe that I was infected with HIV. In the next months, I had many days when I felt sad and angry, but slowly I learned to accept it. I have learned to talk openly with my family and this helped me get their support."  
*- HIV positive 32 years old*
- ✓ Talk to someone you trust. It may make you feel less isolated. Talk to your counsellor about people who you might be able to talk to, like a friend, your spouse or partner, a family member, or a support group. Practice what it feels like to tell someone that you are HIV positive with your counsellor.
- ✓ Join a support group of people living with HIV / AIDS. It may help to meet other people living with HIV or AIDS. Sometimes it helps to share information and experiences.
- ✓ "I wasn't sure that a support group would help me. But my counsellor encouraged me to try it. The first time I went, I realised that others shared some of my feelings and problems! I now go regularly to my support group - we learn from each other and support each other."  
*- HIV positive 24 year old.*

## Take Care of Yourself and Those You Love

- ✓ **Practice safe sex.** This means you should use a male or female condom every time you have sex with your partner, starting immediately. You should do this even if you only have one partner. If you are not sure how to use a male or female condom correctly, ask your counsellor or visit your nearest health centre. There are two important reasons why you should practice safe sex:
  - 1) **Your Health.** You can be re-infected with the HIV virus by having unprotected sex. Being re-infected can make it more difficult for your body to fight infections. This will weaken you faster
  - 2) **The Health** of the people you love. If you are positive, you can infect others with the HIV virus. Make sure you use a male or female condom to keep the other people safe.
- ✓ Avoid drinking alcohol, smoking or taking drugs. These substances can be harmful to your health and could also put you in situations where you might take unhealthy risks.
- ✓ Eat healthy foods and have a balanced diet. You need to stay healthy and avoid infections. Eating healthy food will help you keep your body strong. This does not mean that you must buy expensive food.

### Here are some common foods that are good for you:

- ✓ beans
- ✓ brown bread
- ✓ eggs
- ✓ fish
- ✓ pap
- ✓ any fruits
- ✓ any vegetables
- ✓ ground nuts
- ✓ meat
- ✓ potatoes
- ✓ soya
- ✓ rice
- ✓ milk

Traditional (unrefined) foods are particularly good for you.

### Other things to consider:

- ✓ Exercise and rest adequately. Exercise is good for you and will also help you relax. But don't overdo it - it is also important to rest!
- ✓ Do not ignore minor ailments. Seek treatment as soon as you need it. Also, talk to your nurse or doctor about all the things you can do to stay healthy.
- ✓ If you are planning on having children, talk to your counsellor. He or she will give you information that will help you make your decision.

✓ If you have any questions or need help ...

... talk to your counsellor. He or she can also give you information about helpful resources or support.