

WHAT ARE THE NEW ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY (ART) TREATMENT GUIDELINES?

Starting ART at a CD4 count of 350 reduces mortality and opportunistic infections. Following President Zuma's 2009 World AIDS Day announcement, in April 2010 some groups will be able to get treatment earlier.



WHO WILL GET EARLIER TREATMENT?

People with dual HIV/TB

If you are HIV positive and have TB, you must now be given ART as soon as your CD4 count is below 350. Getting treatment at this earlier stage will help your body to stay healthy and fight off opportunistic infections. Usually, your health care worker will start you on ART a few weeks after starting TB treatment. Know your TB/HIV status to access early treatment.



Pregnant women

If you are pregnant and you have a CD4 count below 350, you must be given triple therapy ART immediately. This is for your own health but will also help prevent transmission of HIV to your baby.

If you are pregnant and your CD4 count is above 350, you must be given PMTCT treatment from the 14th week of pregnancy rather than only in the third trimester (24 weeks). Get tested for HIV to access early treatment and to protect your health and the health of your child.



Infants

If your baby is less than one year old and is HIV positive then he or she should be given ART immediately. If your baby is HIV positive, starting treatment earlier can increase your baby's chances of survival by 75%. Knowing your baby's status is necessary to access early treatment. Ask for your baby to be given a PCR test at six weeks to find out his or her status.

WHAT ARE THE NEW TESTING GUIDELINES?

Under the new HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) guidelines, you should be routinely offered an HIV test when you enter a public health facility. While the offer of HIV testing must be routinely made, you cannot be denied access to healthcare services if you refuse a test. However, refusing a test stops you from accessing ART, TB prevention, and exposes you to unnecessary risks of infection, cancer and other illnesses, the longer you wait. Knowing your status is important to protecting your health and the health of your sexual partners.

