Staying healthy

- Clean your body thoroughly and regularly to avoid germs such as bacteria and fungi.
- Eat a well balanced meal.
  Mealie pap (carbohydrates), vegetables and meat (protein).
- Exercise regularly to keep physically fit.
- Avoid stress – being HIV positive does not mean you should stop leading your regular life or to stop enjoying life the way you always have.
- Go to the clinic if you are feeling ill, do not wait until you are very sick.
- If you are given medication for any ailment make sure you take it according to the health care professionals’ advice or instructions.
- Practice safer sex. Use a condom each time you have sex to avoid re-infection. Re-infection means getting the one you already have in your body.
- Get updated on HIV related issues and treatments.

How do ARVs work?

Antiretrovirals’ suppress the amount of HIV in our bodies by stopping the HIV from multiplying. The immune system then becomes stronger to fight infections.

- You are eligible for ARVs if you have a CD4 count below 250;
- You are eligible for ARVs if you have opportunistic infections e.g. TB;
- If you are taking your ARVs the correct way (adherence), your CD4 should start going up again;
- Monitor and keep record of your CD4 count to know if your CD4 is improving or not.

The table like the one below will help keep record of your CD4 count:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date specimen (CD4) was taken</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 June 2007</td>
<td>189 cells/ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 September 2007</td>
<td>300 cells/ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 December 2007</td>
<td>502 cells/ml</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Get updated on HIV related issues and treatments.
Disclosure

Disclosure means giving out information about your HIV status to someone else. Note that it should be out of your own free will. Before you tell someone about your HIV status be sure to know why you want to tell them. What do you want from them? Be prepared for any reaction they may have to the news. Consider the best and the worst reaction you may have to deal with. They may be scared, mainly out of ignorance so prepare yourself and inform yourself fully about HIV so you can give them information to dispel these fears. Lastly, get support – discuss this issue over with someone you trust. You don’t have to tell everybody. Take your time to decide who to tell and how you will approach them. Be sure you are ready. Remember, once you tell someone, they won’t forget you are HIV positive.

**Telling others can be good because:**
- You can get love and support to help manage your health effectively;
- You can keep your close friends and loved ones informed about issues that are important to you;
- You don’t have to hide your HIV status;
- You can get the most appropriate health care;
- You can reduce the chances of transmitting the disease to others

**Telling others may be difficult because:**
- Others may find it hard to accept your health status;
- Some people might discriminate against you or treat you unfairly because you are HIV positive;
- You may be rejected in social or dating situations.

**Support groups**
- Find out about a support group in your area. The local clinic can help you with such information.
- Meet other people who are HIV positive. Talk to them about your fears and challenges. Sharing experiences can alleviate some of your fears. Peer counseling can also help you.

**Important Contacts**

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4. Israel Tjiharuka
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