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## The Basics of HIV

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Over the past twenty-five years, there have been a number of changes in the ways HIV infection is understood and managed. These changes have led to great improvements in treatment and management of HIV infection and have greatly increased the range of options available.

Since the advent of Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment ([HAART](#) [1]Highly Active AntiRetroviral Therapy ??? aggressive treatment of HIV infection using several different drugs together.) involving combinations of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), deaths from AIDS have dramatically declined, and people with HIV taking treatments now have a much longer life expectancy.

### There are a number of changes which have led to improvements in HIV treatments:

- We have a clearer understanding of how HIV works inside the body
- The use of the [viral load](#) [2]A measurement of the quantity of HIV RNA in the blood. Viral load blood test results are expressed as the number of copies (of HIV) per milliliter of blood plasma. test measuring the amount of HIV circulating in your blood is now standard practice in Australia, Europe and North America. The results of this test can help in making treatment decisions. It can also show how well the treatments you are taking are working against HIV
- The use of genotyping and phenotyping assays (most commonly referred to as [resistance](#) [3]HIV which has mutated and is less susceptible to the effects of one or more anti-HIV drugs is said to be resistant. testing) measure the likelihood of resistance to antiretroviral drugs and provide an indication of which drugs and combinations of drugs are working
- We have a clearer idea of the short- and long-term side effects sometimes experienced by people using these drugs, and how best to manage most of them.

[◀ Ahead of Time: A practical guide to growing older with HIV](#) [4][up](#) [4][Medical Challenges of HIV](#) ▶ [5]

- [ANET resources](#)
- [HIV/AIDS basics](#)

#### Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/96>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/416>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/109>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/ahead-of-time-a-practical-guide-to-growing-older-with-hiv>

[5] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/ahead-of-time-a-practical-guide-to-growing-older-with-hiv/medical-challenges-of-hiv>