

Changes in managing 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) involving combinations of [antiviral](#) [1]A medication or substance which is active against one or more viruses. May include anti-HIV drugs, but these are more accurately termed antiretrovirals. drugs, deaths from AIDS have dramatically declined and people with HIV on treatments have a much longer life expectancy.

There are a number of changes which have led to these improvements:

- 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) used to measure the likelihood of resistance to antiviral drugs and provide an indication of which drugs and combinations of drugs are working; and
- we have a clearer idea of the short and long-term side effects sometimes experienced by people using these drugs, and how to manage most of them.

This resource explains these changes and what they might mean for people living with HIV.

It is primarily about treatments and tests available for HIV, and how they might work for you. However, current HIV treatments are still far from perfect, and for some people, deciding to take HIV treatments raises a number of important issues which you may need to talk about with someone. You may have questions about side effects, confidentiality, or how treatments will affect your day-to-day life.

[Services for people living with HIV](#) [4] gives links to AIDS Councils and [PLHIV](#) [5]Person (or people) Living with HIV. This term is now preferred over the older PLWHA. organisations where you can access counsellors and treatments officers who will be able to help you understand what taking [combination therapy](#) [6]Highly Active AntiRetroviral Therapy ??? aggressive treatment of HIV infection using several different drugs together. might mean for you.

[What this resource does not do](#) [7][up](#) [8][How HIV works](#) > [9]

- [Understanding HIV treatments](#)
- [ANET resources](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/123>

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

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

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/services>

[5] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/689>

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

[7] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/hiv-tests-and-treatments/what-this-resource-does-not-do>

[8] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/hiv-tests-and-treatments>

[9] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/hiv-tests-and-treatments/how-hiv-works>

