BEING INFECTED WITH HIV is not the same as having AIDS

→ **HIV** is the acronym for the "Human Immunodeficiency Virus". HIV affects **immune cells**, the ones that protect us against diseases. A person with HIV may not show symptoms for a long time.

→ **AIDS** is the acronym for "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome". It appears when the HIV infection is in its most advanced stage, after having caused a severe impairment of the immune system. Antiretroviral therapy can control the HIV replication: the infection becomes chronic and does not result in AIDS.
WAYS FOR HIV TRANSMISSION
There are three mechanisms of transmission:

1 **SEXUALLY**
HIV can be transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal or oral). In people following an antiretroviral treatment and with an undetectable viral load, the risk is nearly inexistent.

2 **VIA BLOOD**
Transmission of HIV can occur through transfusions with contaminated blood or after sharing injection material or other cutting objects.

3 **MOTHER TO CHILD**
Mothers may transmit the HIV infection to children during pregnancy, delivery or breast-feeding. Vertical transmission can be totally avoided if the mother is being treated.
How to prevent new infections:

PREVENTION

In order to avoid new infections, it is crucial to establish an early diagnosis and follow up with the prescribed antiretroviral therapy. With adequate treatment, HIV can become undetectable in blood, the immune system can recover and the possibility of transmission decreases.

Use condoms in all sexual intercourse to avoid the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Do not share any type of syringe or needle and take extreme precautions if there are injuries, hemorrhages or any type of cut that might be bleeding.

Women infected with HIV that are contemplating pregnancy must consider the risks and start antiretroviral treatment, if they are not taking it already.

PEP and Prep: Post-Exposition Prophylaxis (PEP) means taking antiretroviral medication as soon as possible after having been exposed to HIV to avoid the infection. Pre-Exposition Prophylaxis (Prep) is currently under study; it has already been accepted in some countries and could be prescribed in higher risk populations.
HIV: EPIDEMIOLOGIC DATA

**HIV**

- It is estimated that HIV affects almost 37 million people all over the world. **Only 40% of them are receiving antiretroviral treatment.**

- Every year, more than 2 million new diagnoses are made: **every 15 seconds,** there is a new infection.

- It is estimated that **25% of people that have HIV, do not even know it.**

**AIDS**

- Since the beginning of the pandemic, **39 million people have died** because of AIDS all over the world.

- Almost **18 million children** have lost one or both parents because of AIDS.

- The number of **AIDS cases is reduced every year** in those countries with good access to antiretroviral treatment.
THE TREATMENT

Nowadays, **there is still no preventive vaccine to avoid new infections** or a treatment to cure HIV/AIDS.

However, the **existing antiretroviral treatments** impede the multiplication of the virus in the body. They do not kill HIV, but they do help to avoid the weakening of the immune system.

The therapy is individualized and **must be prescribed, reviewed and modified, if necessary**, by specialists that follow the patient’s evolution.

If the treatment is followed correctly and is started as early as possible, **the life expectancy of people with HIV is practically the same as the rest of the population.**

However, if the therapy is not followed properly, **the virus can become resistant to the drugs being used**, therefore reducing the efficacy of the treatment.

- The variability and capacity of mutation of the HIV virus means that people can be infected with a virus that is especially aggressive and resistant to treatment.
- Drugs may have adverse effects.