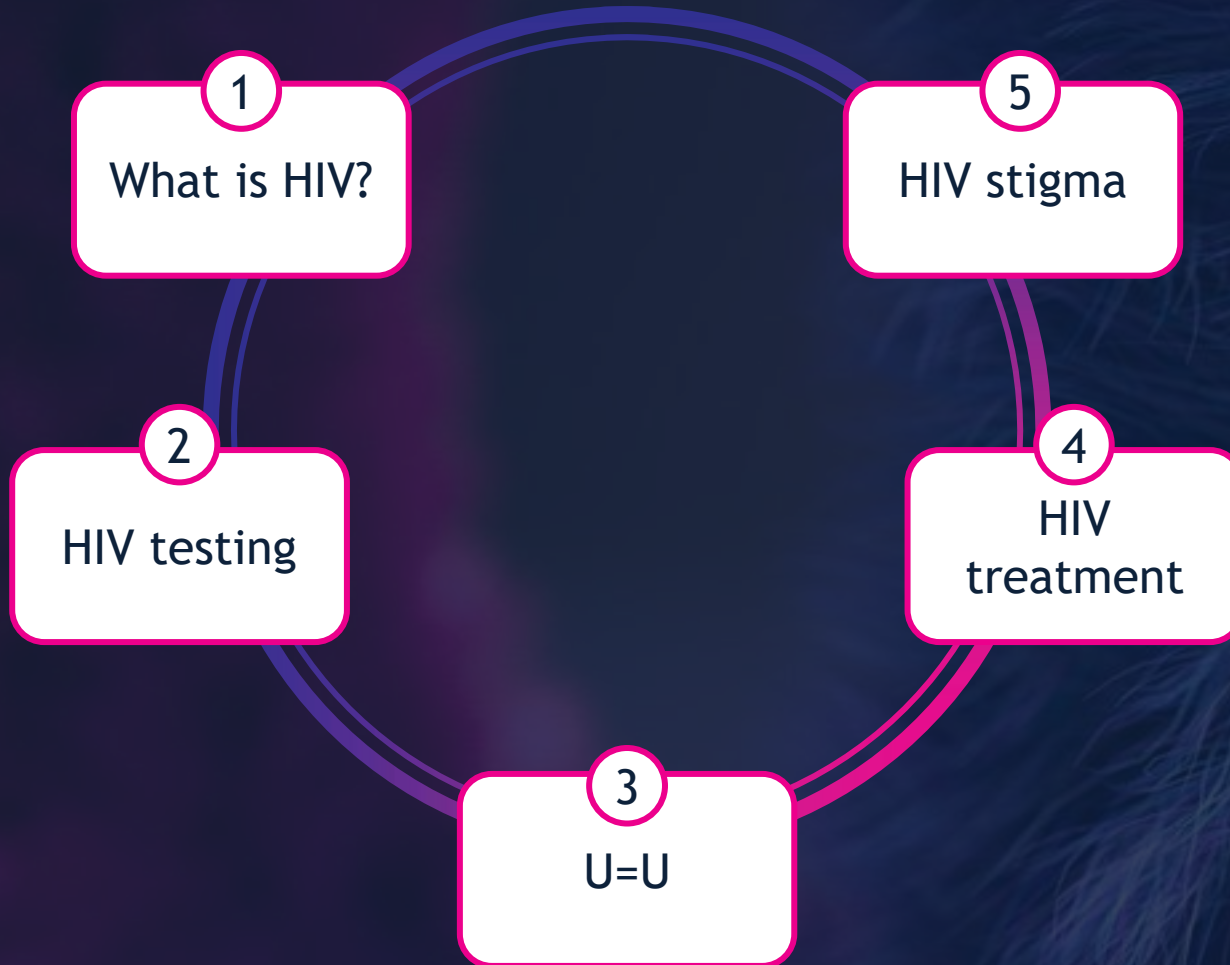


Increasing awareness of HIV and testing

In the past, some people have incorrectly assumed that HIV is a disease that only affects gay men. This is not the case, in 2019 of the 34,800 estimated new HIV infections in the United States, 22% were from people who reported heterosexual contact¹. While in the United Kingdom, nearly half of all new HIV diagnoses were in heterosexuals (49%) in England in 2020, compared to 45% in gay and bisexual men².

Here we provided information on different topics around HIV and HIV testing which you can use to help increase your own awareness of these issues:



Please feel free to use the following resources for more information on the topics discussed:

[The Terrence Higgins Trust](#)

[UNAIDS.org](#)

[amfAR - Links to HIV resources](#)

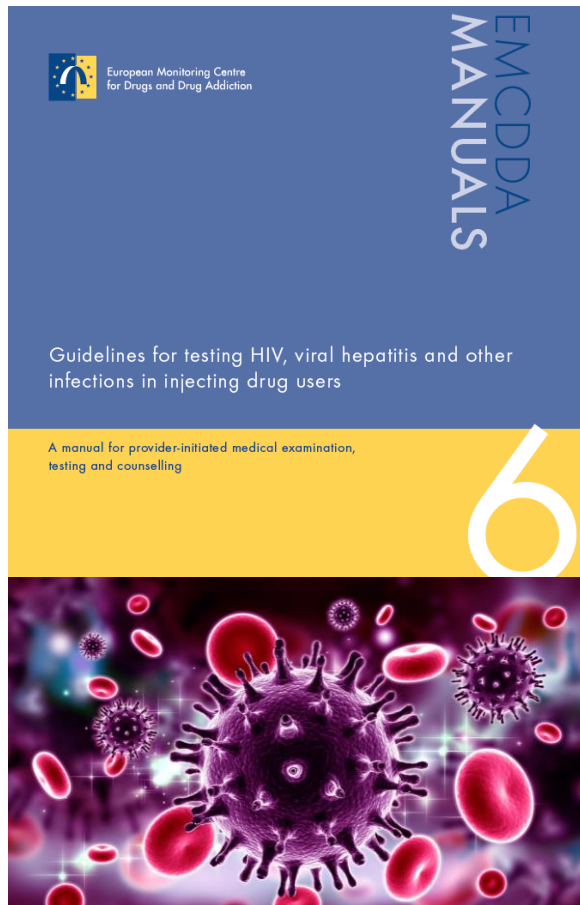
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/overview/in-us/incidence.html> (accessed February 2023); 2. Terrence Higgins Trust. <https://www.tht.org.uk/news/heterosexual-hiv-diagnoses-overtake-those-gay-men-first-time-decade> (accessed February 2023).

What is HIV?^{1,2}

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- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks the immune system and can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) if left untreated
- HIV is primarily spread through blood and certain bodily fluids via sexual contact, sharing needles, or from mother to child during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding
- In the UK, approximately 100,000 people are living with HIV, with 3,000 new diagnoses each year, and a further 5,000 undiagnosed



- Regular testing is crucial in controlling the spread of the virus and ensuring that individuals receive prompt treatment if they test positive
- The UK is also working towards achieving the 95-95-95 targets set by UNAID (The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS)
- These targets aim to ensure that 95% of people living with HIV are diagnosed, 95% of those diagnosed are on ART (antiretroviral therapy), and 95% of those on ART have an undetectable viral load by 2030
- These targets are critical in controlling the spread of the virus and achieving the goal of ending the HIV epidemic



- If a person is found to be HIV positive, they can take steps to maintain an undetectable viral load
- This means that the amount of HIV in a person's blood is too low to be detected by typical tests which is a key aspect of managing the virus and reducing the risk of transmission to others
- Critically, there is strong evidence that shows individuals with **undetectable viral loads cannot transmit the virus sexually**; this concept is known as **Undetectable = Untransmittable**, or U=U for short

HIV Treatment^{1,2}

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- Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is a combination of drugs that are used to treat HIV and have been used for many years to control the virus
- It can help individuals with HIV to maintain an undetectable viral load, reduce the risk of transmission to others, and improve their overall health
- More recently developed as a preventative measure, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a daily pill that can help prevent the transmission of HIV, which is a common method to protect against the virus, especially for those who are at a high risk of exposure to HIV
- In fact, the recent roll out of PrEP on the NHS along with other preventative strategies has been correlated with the significant reduction of new HIV diagnoses across the UK

HIV Stigma

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- Unfortunately, although we have come a long way, there remains a negative stereotype of people living with HIV, which can have a significant impact on their mental health
- In a recent survey across 36 countries, 25 of those countries reported >50% of people aged 15-49 years hold discriminatory attitudes toward people living with HIV
- Luckily, advances in treatment have meant that HIV is now no longer a terminal illness, making it possible for people living with HIV to live long and healthy lives, and many people with HIV lead fulfilling lives with careers, families, and relationships