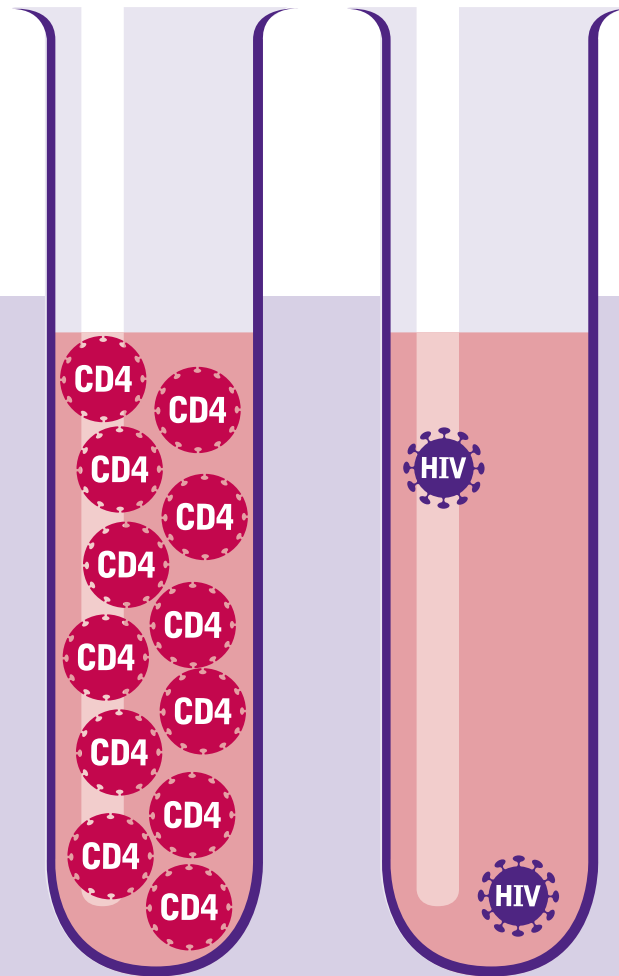


the basics

CD4 and viral load



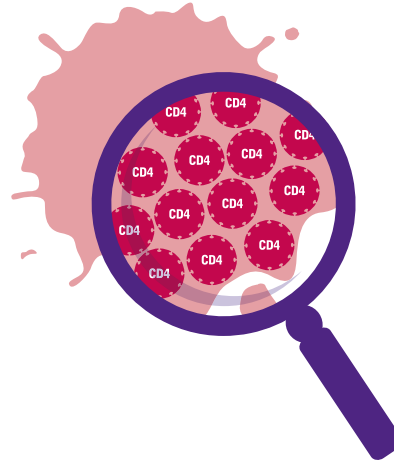
It's important for all people with HIV to take regular blood tests.

The two most important blood tests are for CD4 and viral load.

1 CD4 cells are the most important cells in the immune system. Our immune system protects us against infections and illness.



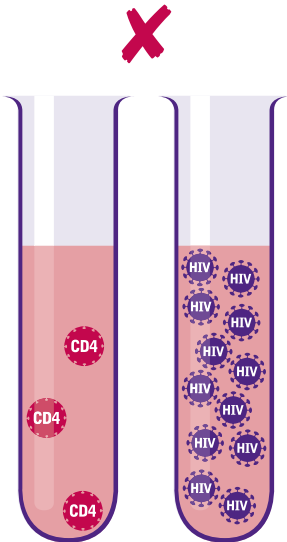
2 The CD4 count tells you how many CD4 cells there are in a drop of blood. The more there are, the better.



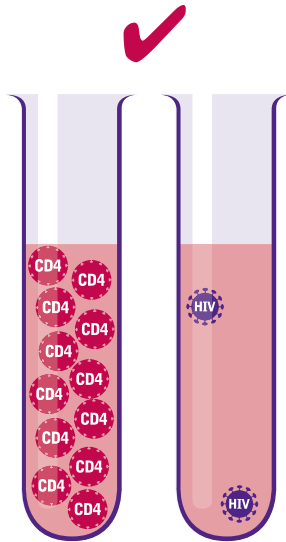
3 Viral load measures how much HIV there is in a drop of blood. You want to have as little HIV as possible.



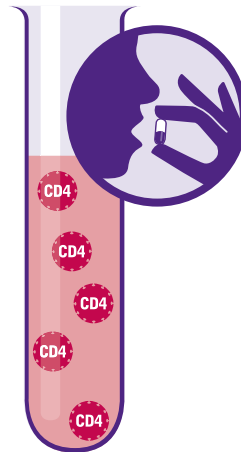
4 When the CD4 count is low, the viral load is usually high. This situation is not good.



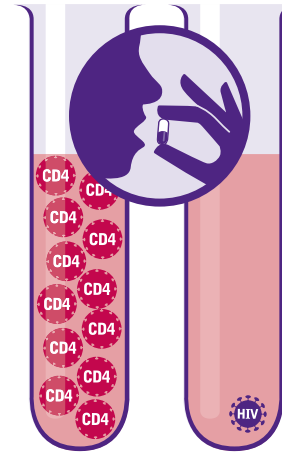
5 When the CD4 count is high, the viral load is usually low. This is much better.



6 If your CD4 count has dropped to 350 or below, it's recommended you start treatment.



7 The result of treatment should be the CD4 going up, and the viral load going right down.



Important points

- CD4 and viral load test results give essential information about the effect HIV is having on your body.
- The aim of HIV treatment is to have a very low (or 'undetectable') viral load and a high CD4 count.

Notes

Quick guide to test results

CD4 counts

- Between 500 and 1200 = usual for people who don't have HIV
- Above 350 = HIV treatment **isn't** usually recommended
- Below 350 = HIV treatment **is** recommended
- Below 200 = there is a higher risk of illnesses and infections, so HIV treatment is recommended

Your doctor may give your CD4 results as a percentage

- Above 29% = similar to a CD4 count of above 500
- Below 14% = similar to a CD4 count of below 200

Viral load

- Between 100,000 and 1 million = high
- Below 10,000 = for people with HIV not on treatment, this is low
- Below 50 = known as an 'undetectable' viral load. The aim of HIV treatment is to have an undetectable viral load.

Want to find out more?

For more information on this topic:

- read NAM's fact sheets 'CD4 cell counts' and 'Viral load'
- read NAM's leaflet in this series 'Undetectable Viral Load'
- read Terrence Higgins Trust's booklet 'Your Treatment', or
- speak to an adviser at THT Direct (phone: 0845 12 21 200).

For more information about HIV, NAM provides free fact sheets, information booklets, e-mail bulletins, a monthly newsletter, a comprehensive website (aidsmap.com) and a website specifically for people living with HIV (namlife.org).

Contact us by calling 020 7840 0050 or by sending an e-mail to info@nam.org.uk

Has this resource been useful to you? Please let us know what you think by visiting www.aidsmap.com/feedback, by phoning us or by sending an e-mail. Your feedback helps us to improve the services we offer you.



NAM

Lincoln House
1 Brixton Road
London SW9 6DE

Phone: 020 7840 0050

Fax: 020 7735 5351

Website: www.aidsmap.com

E-mail: info@nam.org.uk

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