

MODERN ART FOR UGANDA

# ADVANCED HIV DISEASE TREATMENT LITERACY

Everyone with HIV  
needs to take HIV treatment  
– called antiretroviral  
therapy, ART or ARVs

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# WHAT IS ADVANCED HIV DISEASE (AHD)?

AHD is a condition where adults and adolescents, and children older than five years living with HIV have a CD4 count below 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>.

All children living with HIV below five years are considered to have AHD.





CD4 cells are infection-fighting white blood cells. The fewer CD4 cells you have, the more you are at risk of illnesses.

In Uganda, with the introduction of Test and Treat, people usually start ART before their CD4 is too low. A few people in denial will access testing and go for treatment when their CD4 is too low.



## **AHD & CD4**

**Everyone diagnosed with HIV or re-entering care should get a CD4 test.**

**The risk of death is higher with a low CD4 count, especially below 100 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>.**

**A CD4 count below 50 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> is severely advanced disease.**

# WHAT ARE THE DANGER SIGNS?



Anyone with any of these danger signs should visit the hospital immediately.

A seriously ill adult or adolescent might have:

- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heart beat
- Unable to walk without help
- High temperature (39°C or more)
- Unexplainable body weakness

A seriously ill child might have:

- Sleepiness
- Unconsciousness
- Convulsions (violent, irregular movement)
- Unable to drink or breastfeed
- Repeated vomiting
- High temperature (39°C or more)
- Sleeplessness
- Restlessness

# WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT AHD?

The best way to prevent AHD is to start ART when your CD4 count is high. Everyone should start ART when they are diagnosed, whatever their CD4 count.

- Early diagnosis and immediate initiation on ART (start treatment immediately you test HIV Positive (Test and Treat))
- The only time when starting ART should be delayed is when TB or cryptococcal meningitis is present
- Adherence to ART
- Access to prophylaxis, including co-trimoxazole and TB prevention therapy
- Look out for signs and symptoms mentioned and if you have them see your health provider immediately
- Access to monitoring tests including viral load and CD4 count for early detection of AHD

## **WHAT IF YOUR CD4 COUNT IS ALREADY LOW?**

Starting ART right away gives you the best chance of getting better and avoiding illnesses, even with a very low CD4 count.

People with AHD need a special package of care, including counselling, ART and medicines to prevent or treat other infections – and information so they are comfortable with their decision to start ART.

## **CAN SOMEBODY ALREADY ON ART HAVE AHD?**

Yes! If they do not adhere to their ARVs properly, someone could develop treatment failure due to non-adherence. This leads to your CD4 count going down and the result is AHD.

# TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

TB, a bacterial infection, that in most cases attacks the lungs, is the leading cause of illness and death among people living with HIV – especially people with AHD and those who are not yet taking ART. Symptoms include coughing, fever, night sweats and weight loss.

People diagnosed with TB should start TB treatment before starting (or re-starting) ART.

In Uganda, about 40% of all TB cases in clinical settings are co-infected with HIV, PLHIV should be routinely screened for TB.

*For more information about TB, see our booklet ART & TB.*





# TB PREVENTION AND TESTING



Everyone starting ART will be screened for TB. Adults, adolescents and children who do not have TB should be offered TB preventive treatment.

All people with TB symptoms should get a sputum test called Xpert MTB/RIF.

In addition, adults, adolescents and children who are very ill and/or have a CD4 count below 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> should get a urine test called TB-LAM to aid diagnosis.

# SEVERE BACTERIAL INFECTIONS (SBI)

People with AHD often have severe bacterial infections in the bloodstream, nose, mouth, throat, voice box, windpipe or lungs, the brain and spinal cord or the stomach and intestine.

Cotrimoxazole protects against a number of common SBIs and other infections. People living with HIV in places where SBI or malaria are common should get lifelong cotrimoxazole, whatever their CD4 count.

Dapsone is available for people who react to cotrimoxazole.

# CRYPTOCOCCAL

# MENINGITIS



Cryptococcal meningitis is a serious fungal infection of the brain and spinal cord.

Symptoms are headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, light sensitivity, confusion and behavior changes.

Adults and adolescents with a CD4 count under 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> should have a CrAg test and a lumbar puncture if necessary; if positive, depending on how bad the disease, fluconazole alone or in combination other medicines (amphotericin B and flucytosine) will be needed for treatment.

Fluconazole can be used as a preventive therapy for cryptococcal meningitis.

**PNEUMOCYSTIS**

**JIROVECI**

**PNEUMONIA (PCP)**



**PCP, a fungal infection, is a leading cause of illness and death among adults, adolescents and children with AHD.**

**Symptoms are: cough, chest pain and discomfort; difficulty and fast breathing; non-productive cough; fever and tiredness.**

**It can be prevented and treated with cotrimaxozole.**



## **TOXOPLASMOSIS**

**Toxoplasmosis, a common infection caused by a parasite, can make people very ill if their CD4 count is under 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>.**

**Symptoms may be similar to those of TB, cryptococcal meningitis, or pneumocystis, or headache, confusion, seizures, blurry vision, and poor coordination.**

**Cotrimaxozole can be used to prevent it and for treatment (as well as other options).**



# CYTOMEGALOVIRUS

**(CMV)**

People with a CD4 cell count below 50 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> are at risk for CMV retinitis, an eye infection.

Symptoms are: blurred vision, blind spots, peripheral vision loss, 'floaters' (small white specks) and light flashes. Untreated CMV retinitis causes blindness.

ART can prevent CMV retinitis. It can be treated with medicines that are taken orally or injected into the eye.



## **STAYING HEALTHY**

**Getting tested for HIV, starting ART and taking it every day can prevent HIV from weakening the immune system.**

For people with advanced HIV, taking ART can help the immune system to recover, and other medicines can protect you from opportunistic infections.



Find out more about treatment  
and the free app at:

[www.modernartforsouthafrica.co.za](http://www.modernartforsouthafrica.co.za)



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