

# HIV diagnosis and treatment

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well for a longer period of time.

**Staying healthy**  
An individual who tests positive must first find an experienced HIV medical provider. Although there is no cure for HIV/AIDS, treatment options currently exist to help sustain the health of individuals living with the disease. The provider will perform certain tests to get a clear picture of how HIV has progressed in the body and to determine when that individual should start taking HIV medications. These medications can be quite expensive, and getting treatment can seem particularly challenging for those with a limited income or no health insurance. Yet, it is absolutely critical to the survival of those with HIV/AIDS that they get appropriate medical management. There are programs and social services that will provide assistance with medications and healthcare costs for those in need. Generally, people living with HIV/AIDS should visit their healthcare provider every 3 to 6 months, but more frequent visits may be warranted.

Drug treatment for HIV is known as antiretroviral therapy (anti means against, retroviral refers to the HIV type of virus (retrovirus) the drug is fighting). Your physician may choose combined antiretroviral therapy (ART) or highly-active antiretroviral therapy (HAART). Usually, 3 different drugs are taken together, 2 to 4 times a day. Some tablets now contain 2 or 3 different medications. The advantage of these combination drugs is that people do not need to take as many tablets each day to get the same benefits.

**How treatment works**  
Medications control the virus by stopping it from making copies of itself (replicating) inside the cells of the body. Generally, the virus gets into a cell and starts to replicate, and the new viruses then spread out of that cell and into another. Some medications, such as fusion inhibitors, stop the HIV from entering a new cell altogether.

Over time, one's HIV can

become resistant to the medications, which means that the medications will not work as well for that person. The treatment may then have to be changed to a different combination of drugs. Individuals taking drug treatment for HIV will probably need to take it for the rest of their lives. It is crucial for a person with HIV to take his or her medication exactly as prescribed and not to miss any doses. Stopping the medications, even for short periods of time, can cause the virus to become resistant to those drugs.

While treatment offers hope to many, it is not a cure and does not work well for everyone. Even when it does control the infection, the virus remains in the body of the person living with HIV/AIDS. It is particularly important for pregnant women who are infected to receive treatment, as certain medications can decrease the likelihood that the unborn child will be infected. Treatment does NOT prevent an individual with HIV from passing the virus to other people through body fluids, such as during unprotected sex or sharing needles or injecting-drug equipment. Treatment also does NOT prevent an individual with HIV/AIDS from getting re-infected with a different strain of HIV. It is crucial



PHOTO/WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

The death rate from HIV/AIDS has declined in general in the last decade, but is disproportionately high among blacks.

Contribution by Scott D. Rhodes Ph.D., MPH

For more information about the Maya Angelou Research Center on Minority Health, visit <http://www.wfubmc.edu/minority-health> or call (336) 713.7578.

that infected individuals on treatment remain vigilant and continue to practice safer sex or, if addicted to drugs, not to share injecting drug equipment.

Remember: Knowledge is power, but it is what you do with it that makes all the difference!

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"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thy wounds, saith the Lord." - Jeremiah 30: 17



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### Do You Have A Plan B?

As we seek to make our dreams come true, we do what we can to narrow our focus to what we really want in life. We have come to realize that if we are going to accomplish our goals, we must reduce the number of distractions that can get us off track.

It is easy to get caught up in activities or pursuits that can take us away from our main goals in life. There is always something that comes across our path that can claim our attention. So often these things seem like emergencies and if not emergencies, they appear to at least be urgent. If we allow our selves to run after them, before we know it, we have forgotten our main focus.

Yet, at the same time, we can become so focused on one thing that we run the risk of becoming so narrow in our focus that we miss the inevitable realities of making our dreams come true.

Sometimes as we pursue our dreams, we forget what it is that we really want. Often we confuse what we really want with the vehicle or way of making our dreams a reality.

For example, we may say that we want a special relationship. We begin pursuing this relationship with someone. However, no matter how much we may invest in the relationship emotionally or even financially, it does not work. We may even refuse to accept that it is not working, although everyone around us keeps pointing it out to us.

What has happened is that we have

forgotten our real goal. The real goal was to have a wonderful relationship. We came to the point in the pursuit of the relationship that it had to be with a specific individual. If we turn the failing relationship loose, that frees us to pursue the possibilities that perhaps there is somebody else with whom a relationship will indeed succeed.

We can fall into this trap in other ways as well. Our goal may be to have financial independence or a secure retirement. We get committed to a certain method or plan that we believe will give us the financial security that we seek. But events may prove to us that the business idea or investment plan that we had is not going to get us what we want or need. We may have invested thousands of dollars into that particular plan. Some of us would refuse to turn it loose and instead would continue to invest.

Again, the problem is that we have confused the vehicle or method of achieving our dream with our dream. If we keep separate our dream and the methods of achieving our dreams, this opens us up to other possibilities to achieve what we really want in life.

So the basic question is "Do you have a plan B?" Have you thought of what you would do if what you have chosen as a way to reach your dreams does not work out? Do you have another way to make your dreams come true just in case? **Need A Second Plan?**

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## AMERICARE HEALTH

Edosomwan Awards 5 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Seniors \$1,000 Scholarships

Bringing AmeriCares Total Awards to \$50,000



Friday, July 07, 2006 Dr. Fidelis Edosomwan presented 5 Charlotte-Mecklenburg seniors with \$1,000 scholarships each to help defray the cost of their college education. AmeriCares Marshville office in Union county, and Pageland office in Chesterfield county, South Carolina previously awarded area seniors as well. AmeriCare's total scholarship awards to date are over \$50,000.

Dr. Edosomwan shared several life examples as he stressed the importance of furthering their education to the recipients and family members. He emphasized that only with knowledge could they make a difference in not only their lives but the lives of others. "Your ultimate goal is to make our communities more sound, and a better place to live," said Edosomwan.



Recipients gathered in front of AmeriCares Milton Rd. office to say thank you.  
Left to right: Shatika Johnson - Vance High, Fiona Williams - Berry Academy of Technology, (center) Dr. Edosomwan, Xavier Dunn - Berry Academy of Technology, Laura Ndelo - West Charlotte High, and Kenyarder Lewis, Jr. - Berry Academy of Technology