



# WORLD AIDS DAY

1 DECEMBER

## KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING THIS WORLD AIDS DAY

On this **World Aids Day (1 December 2022)**, let's lay the foundation for supportive conversation on the subject of HIV/AIDS.

Fear, stigma and ignorance still prevail, even though we now have easily accessible testing and treatment options available, which allow people living with HIV to live long, happy, healthy lives.

According to the World Health Organization, nearly a million people still die every year from the virus because they don't know they have HIV, are not on treatment, or they start treatment late. Why don't people seek help? Aside from an understandable fear of illness, people are afraid of stigma and discrimination. Prejudice could be as devastating as the illness itself, whether rejection by a partner or family, being excluded from social circles, lack of support and care, or even open hostility.

But it is in speaking out, in telling our stories and sharing information, that we can continue to fight prejudice, stigma and discrimination. It starts with creating a culture of compassion and understanding.

## EDUCATE YOURSELF



We have a wealth of scientific information at our fingertips today and it's easy to learn the basics. This can help each one of us feel more comfortable if someone shares their HIV status. Try to understand the virus, how it's contracted and spread, and what treatment options are available.

Read more about HIV/AIDS:

**AIDS Foundation South Africa (AFSA)**  
**World AIDS Day official website**  
**Treatment Action Campaign**  
**loveLife**

## BE OPEN

You can create a safe space for talking about HIV/AIDS in the way you respond when a friend, family member, or colleague shares their diagnosis.

- You've been entrusted with deeply personal information, and this should be acknowledged.
- They need to know you're there for them, and you will keep this private.
- Express interest in how they're doing and how you can help.
- Without judgement or preconceptions, try to truly hear what they're communicating.
- Depending on the situation, you may need to encourage them to seek further help, treatment and/or they may need emotional support.
- Take your cues from them. For example, if they want to chat, make time to do so; if they clearly don't want to talk, don't force it.
- Never ask how they got the virus or share 'horror stories' about HIV/AIDS.



## GET HELP



Just like any chronic condition, people living with HIV need the right treatment and you can encourage and support them in accessing this help. If someone close to you has been diagnosed, it's important that you get support too. You may feel distressed, sad, angry or even depressed about their news. Seek help from a counsellor or doctor.

**National AIDS helpline (Lifeline SA):**  
**0800 012 322.**

As our former President Nelson Mandela has said: 'Many people suffering from AIDS and not killed by the disease itself, are killed by the stigma surrounding everybody who has HIV and AIDS.' HIV/AIDS has not gone away and collectively, there is the need to increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education.

**Remember that your employee wellness programme is available to you and your family with free and confidential health and wellness counselling, advice and support.**

### References

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)  
 South African Government  
 World Health Organization (WHO)

▶ Education department toll free:  
**0800 111 011**

▶ Send a USSD to:  
**\*134\*664\*38#**

▶ Email:  
**wced@mhg.co.za**



**Let us stay mindful of caring for one another and ourselves**