So you have HIV.

It is now very important that you look after your health.

Most men, women and children who have HIV will feel healthy and well for many years.

Having HIV does NOT mean you are dying or that you have AIDS.

It does NOT mean that you are going to get sick immediately.

Some people find life with HIV difficult.
If you feel this way too, there are services which can help.

Some of these services are listed at the back of this booklet.

You might decide to keep your HIV status private. Or you might choose to tell some people. It is your decision.

Even doctors, nurses or other health services cannot tell anyone else that you have HIV without your permission. It is against the law.

HIV medical services are available to everyone.

HIV is a virus.

A virus is a tiny organism which can enter your blood and make you ill.
The immune system normally fights any disease or virus which enters your blood. The immune system normally helps you to get better when you are ill.

HIV is a virus which attacks and weakens your immune system.

If HIV weakens your immune system, you can become ill more easily.

It is important to look after your health and protect your immune system.

To find out how to protect your immune system from HIV, call one of the telephone numbers listed at the back of this booklet.

We usually think of doctors only when we are sick. But doctors can also help us to stay healthy.
A Western medical doctor can help you stay healthy by regularly measuring the strength of your immune system. This is called ‘monitoring your health’.

To monitor your health, the doctor will take a small amount of blood from you and measure how much HIV is in it. This is called your ‘viral load’.

If your viral load is low, this means that the virus is doing less damage to your immune system.

Your doctor can also measure how healthy your immune system is by counting the CD4 cells in your blood. This is called your ‘CD4 count’.

CD4 cells help your body to fight illness. If your CD4 count is high, this means your immune system has the strength to fight off illness.
Monitoring your health helps you and your doctor to work out which medicines will work best for you, and when you should take them.

There are different types of Western medicine which help you to stay healthy by stopping HIV from damaging your immune system.

Some people prefer to see both Western doctors and practitioners of traditional medicine such as herbalists or acupuncturists.

If you are seeing more than one healer, you should let them know about the other treatments you are having. This will help each of them to choose the best treatment for you.

It is possible to have children when you have HIV.

There are ways to reduce the chance of your baby being born with HIV.
However, there are no guarantees.

To find out more, speak to your doctor or call the services listed at the back of this booklet.

Taking some recreational drugs when you are also taking HIV medicine can be dangerous. It is important to talk with your doctor about this.

Your doctor is not allowed to tell anyone else about your drug use without your permission.

If you prefer to speak your language, there are interpreters available. The interpreter does not have to be of your nationality. Some people from other communities can speak your language.

The services listed at the back of this booklet can help you contact an interpreter.

Remember: it is against the law for any interpreter or health service to tell someone else that you have HIV without your permission.
AIDS Councils offer counselling, support and can tell you about special services for people who have HIV. They can also give you information and advice about HIV medicines.

There are also groups for people with HIV.

They are called ‘PLWHA groups’, which stands for ‘People Living With HIV and AIDS’. There are PLWHA groups in each State and Territory.

AIDS Councils and PLWHA groups help people who have HIV to learn from each other about how to make it easier to live with HIV.

They can help arrange for an interpreter if you prefer to speak your language.

### AIDS Councils phone numbers:

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<tr>
<th>AIDS Council</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>02 6257 2855</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>02 9206 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>08 8944 7777</td>
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<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>07 3017 1777</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>03 6234 1242</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>03 9865 6700</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>08 9482 0000</td>
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### PLWHA groups phone numbers:

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<th>PLWHA</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>02 9206 2177</td>
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<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>07 3013 5555</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>03 9863 8733</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAPWHA</td>
<td>02 8568 0300</td>
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