

# RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO HIV-RELATED DISEASES

A guide for community-based organizations, people living with HIV, and their caregivers



## 1 What are HIV-related diseases?

Untreated HIV, or treatment that is not effective, can lead to loss of CD4 cells, which are the cells that help fight infections. HIV-related diseases occur when a person living with HIV has a low CD4 cell count (below 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>), or when they have one or more infections such as tuberculosis or a fungus.

## 2 In which type of patients are HIV-related diseases most commonly seen?

- HIV-positive individuals who have had HIV for a long time and have not taken antiretroviral treatment (ART)
- Individuals who have stopped their ART
- Individuals who have trouble staying on ART or whose treatment is not working

Recent evidence in Vietnam suggests that HIV-related diseases may be more common among people living with HIV who are **male, single, live alone, and/or unemployed** or with **unstable employment**.



## 3 How can you detect HIV-related disease?

It is important for a CD4 test to be conducted for each of the following groups of individuals:

- People who have just been diagnosed with HIV
- People who have started ART after having stopped
- People whose ART is not working

The test will help determine what kind of treatment or preventive therapy they might need.

### Common symptoms among individuals with HIV-related disease

Prolonged fever with unknown causes	Coughing, rapid breathing, difficult breathing, rapid heartbeat	Loss of >10% of body weight, unknown causes	Skin, genital, or anal issues
Diarrhea, severe thirst, stomachache	Swollen lymph nodes in neck or armpits	Severe headache	Need for assistance while walking
Dizziness or fainting	Abnormal behaviors, changes in behaviors	Unable to recognize places, time, relatives	Lying in bed for prolonged period



## Common infections and signs in persons with HIV-related disease



**Tuberculosis/Lymph node tuberculosis:** Cough, fever, weight loss, night sweats, swollen lymph nodes in neck, armpits



**Oral thrush:** White patches that can easily be wiped off in the mouth and tongue



**Esophageal thrush:** Pain when swallowing; often accompanies oral thrush



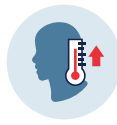
**Herpes:** Small blisters, breaking and forming scabs and ulcers, around nose, mouth, genitals, anus



**Fungal infection:** Damage to the skin in the face, body, arms, legs



**Encephalitis:** Headache, confusion, paralysis or weakness in limbs



**Meningitis:** Headache, vomiting, sensitivity to light, stiff neck



**When an HIV-positive person has or is suspected to have one of the above infections, they should be transferred to an HIV treatment facility immediately for testing and treatment**

### 4 Why is it important to identify HIV-related diseases early?

The sooner someone who may have HIV-related disease goes to an HIV treatment facility, the more likely they will be to recover, and live a long, healthy life.

### 5 What kind of services can be accessed at a treatment facility for HIV-related disease?

- Management of symptoms and counseling for patients and their families
- Diagnosis and treatment of infections
- Provision of ART and counseling and support to stay on treatment
- Preventive therapy to stop infections from occurring including:
  - Tuberculosis prophylaxis (latent tuberculosis treatment)
  - Co-trimoxazol prophylaxis (to prevent fungal infections)
  - Cryptococcosis prophylaxis (as available)

### 6 How can HIV-related diseases be detected and prevented in the community?

Early detection and referral to a facility are critical. Community partners can provide the following:

- Communication on HIV and HIV-related disease for people who are at high risk of infection including: men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers, people who use drugs, clients of sex workers, partners of people living with HIV, and individuals on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) who have had HIV exposure within 72 hours of starting PrEP
- Counseling and support for people who are testing for, and especially those who screen or test positive for HIV; these individuals should be linked to a treatment facility as soon as possible.
- Counseling on treatment adherence
- Tracking of, and counseling for individuals who show signs or symptoms of HIV-related disease
- Psychosocial counseling and support HIV-positive persons and their caregivers

