

NA WA-OH !

DEMYSTIFYING
COMMON MYTHS,
MISCONCEPTIONS AND
RUMORS CONCERNING
HIV & AIDS



CHAMP

CHAMP Project

*Continuum for Prevention,
Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS
with Most at-risk Populations*



Demystifying common myths, misconceptions and rumours concerning HIV & AIDS

This booklet is quite educative, rich in information and dispels my fears about HIV and AIDS. Thanks to the practical advice provided in it, I can better manage my serological status, activity, sexuality and health. «Na wa-oh !» is an expression in pidgin English for surprise when confronted with an unexpected discovery.

With "NA WA-OH !", I can put into practice what I learn and can easily convey key positive messages on HIV/AIDS.

*The booklet is produced in collaboration with the **CHAMP Project**.*

Coordination: CARE International au Cameroun

Design : Moto Action

Illustrations & ArtWork : NouterArt

©2017

Content

NA WA-OH !

*Unraveling the truth about TESTING
Pages 5 - 7*

NA WA-OH !

*Unraveling the truth about HIV/AIDS TREATMENT
Pages 8 - 13*

NA WA-OH !

*Unraveling the truth about POSITIVE LIFE
Pages 14 – 17*

NA WA-OH !

*Unraveling the truth about GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE
Pages 18 – 21*

NA WA-OH !

*Unraveling that truth about STIs
Pages 22 – 23*

NA WA-OH !

*Unraveling the truth about CONDOMS
Pages 24– 26*

The project aims to reduce HIV/STI infections and related morbidity and mortality, and to ease the impact of HIV on the socioeconomic development of Cameroon, by strengthening the technical capacity of government and civil society geared towards implementing evidence-based prevention, care and treatment services and stigma reduction with key populations (KPs) in Cameroon.

CHAMP means Continuum for Prevention, Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS with Most at-risk Populations.

Contacts:

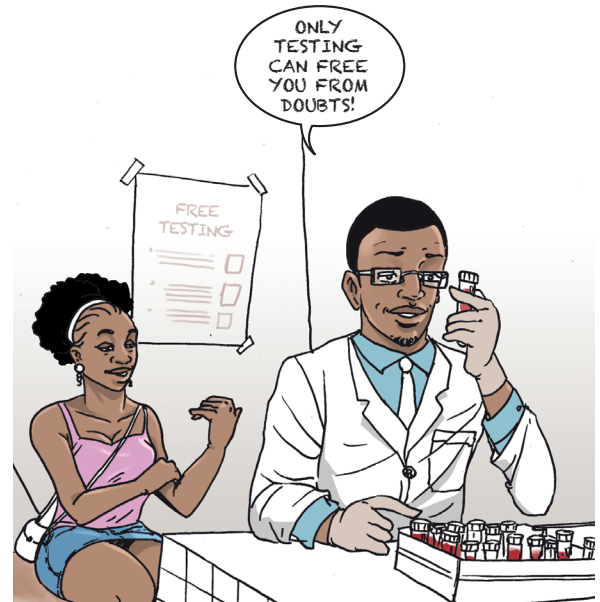
CHAMP Project Office
CARE International in Cameroon

Sic Hippodrome, Villa La Rose (First floor)
40, Street # 1079

P.O. Box 15126 Yaoundé – Cameroun

Telephone: + (237) 222 22 38 01 / + (237) 222 22 38 02

Email: contact1.@carecameroun.org



NA WA-OH !

Unraveling the truth about TESTING

Why is testing important?

If I know my status, I can better manage my health!

HIV does not kill; it is fear, ignorance and neglect that kill.

Only testing can free my doubts! Testing is the only means to know my serological status (positive or negative). **Testing** is the process of getting counselled, collecting and analyzing my blood, being informed about my results and counseled on the appropriate behavior to adopt (safe sex, correct use of condom, etc), thanks to the help of a qualified health or community staff.

The earlier I know my status and start my antiretroviral treatment (ART) in case I am HIV positive, the more effective this treatment will be ("Test and Start").

Why is testing reliable?

Testing is a safe and reliable act that is good for my health !

I have no fear of being tested. Testing can neither transmit HIV nor trigger any disease.

The equipment used for my test is 100% reliable; they pass through strict controls by the Ministry of Public Health.

The equipment used for my test sample (needle, gloves, tube) is used only once; it is systematically destroyed together with the blood sample taken.

Now, there are also rapid tests that require a drop of blood from the fingertip or saliva.



NA WA-OH !

Unraveling the truth about HIV/AIDS TREATMENT

Why I must take my treatment as soon as possible and without ever stopping it even if I feel good?

Treatment makes me stay healthy!

Antiretroviral drugs are free. They allow me to stay healthy for long and to be able to go about activities important to me.

Today I **have the opportunity to get on treatment just after testing if my result is positive.** It is a recommendation of the Ministry of Public Health, the World Health Organization and UNAIDS.

If I start my ART immediately, right after testing, **treatment will be more effective** ("Test & Start") and I can live better and longer. I can have children who are not HIV-positive and I am less contagious to my partners.

If I stop my treatment, the virus will become stronger and even become resistant to the treatment that I will resume afterwards. Therefore, I run the risk of worsening my health and getting sick.

Why prayer can heal my soul, but only ART will heal my body?

There is no cure for HIV.

Only ART can prevent the multiplication of HIV in my body and keep me alive.

Traditional healers and prayers cannot cure me just as they can neither cure diabetes nor hypertension.

But prayer and ART can work together. Both are important for my morale and health. Prayer allows me to be hopeful and to feel more confident. It motivates me to take care of myself and therefore to take my ART.

Advanced research shows a possibility of a cure in the future. If I am alive and I remain healthy, I hope to be cured tomorrow when a cure is found.

What if my partner and I are both living with HIV?

We hold on to each other. We take ART correctly so that the viral load becomes undetectable in our bodies.

ART protects us from the sexual transmission of HIV, except when one of us carries a type of virus that is already resistant to drugs.

Even when our viral loads are undetectable, we must consult with our medical doctor before choosing the most appropriate means of prevention and / or contraception for our couple.

In all cases, we regularly have a check-up to see if we have been exposed to STIs and viral hepatitis B and C.

However, we continue to use preventive measures against STIs and hepatitis because ART neither prevents nor treats STIs.

What if my partner and I have different serological status?

We hold on to each other. The partner living with HIV should get on treatment as soon as possible so that the other is not infected.

We continue to use condoms until the viral load of the person living with HIV is undetectable.

And when the viral load has become undetectable, we seek the advice from our doctor before choosing the most appropriate means of prevention and / or contraception.

We can also use emergency treatment in cases of condom breakage if the person living with HIV does not yet have an undetectable viral load.

If we want to have a baby, we will also seek the advice of a doctor.

Why alcohol and hard drugs are enemies to my treatment?

Mixing ART, consumption of alcohol and hard drugs can be harmful to the body.

If I consume hard drugs and/or alcohol, I have to tell the doctor.

Alcohol and hard drugs can make me less vigilant, less cautious, **and more unaware of the risks.**

If I live with HIV and I consume alcohol or hard drugs, I may no longer be able to meet the regular intake of medication (daily without interruption and at fixed times). This will lead to resistance of HIV to the drug. This consumption can also lead me to neglect of the correct and systematic use of condoms.

The benefits of stopping the use of alcohol and drugs will be immediate in terms of improving my health and appropriate intake of my ART.



NA WA-OH !

Unraveling the truth about POSITIVE LIFE

Why does my health come first and is it important to take care of my body?

Hygiene is taking care of my body, looking after it and respecting it.

Having good hygiene is:

Respecting the rules of good health and cleanliness of the body (wash, wash hands as often as possible and with "savon", etc.).

Sleeping early and sufficiently (7 to 8 hours on average, from 10PM at the latest).

Practicing regular sports and physical education.

Drinking enough water and less alcoholic or soft drinks as well as eating at regular hours.

Carrying out medical follow-up and be consulted in case of ill health.

Why do I have to eat well and stay healthy?

«Eating well» or having a balanced diet does not necessarily mean eating what is expensive.

My body needs everything necessary to function well **and a balanced diet means eating a little bit of everything and varying food items.**

I prefer fresh vegetables from the market, avoiding roadside food (“achombo”) or reheating cooked meals over and over to avoid poisoning.

I cook meat well, and don't overcook vegetables to keep all their vitamins.

I drink enough water and avoid soft drinks.

I balance my meals by eating green vegetables rich in fiber and vitamins (leaves, “ndole”, “green”, spices, etc), tubers rich in carbohydrates (cassava, cocoyam, yam, etc) or starchy fruits (plantain, plum, etc), food high in protein (red beans, groundnuts, soybeans, pumpkin seeds “egusi”, or I can have it from fish or meat) and natural fruits.

I do not eat citrus fruits like grapefruits, limes, lemons, etc; they create an overdose effect if I consume them just before or after taking ARTs.

I must wash my vegetables properly if I must consume them as salad.

Why do I have every reason to stay proud of myself?

I have values, desires, dreams and projects that I can lead and implement, although I am HIV-positive

Positive or negative, I remain handsome/beautiful and desirable. My serological status does not reflect on my body or my face.

I have ideas, wishes, dreams and projects to share and carry out.

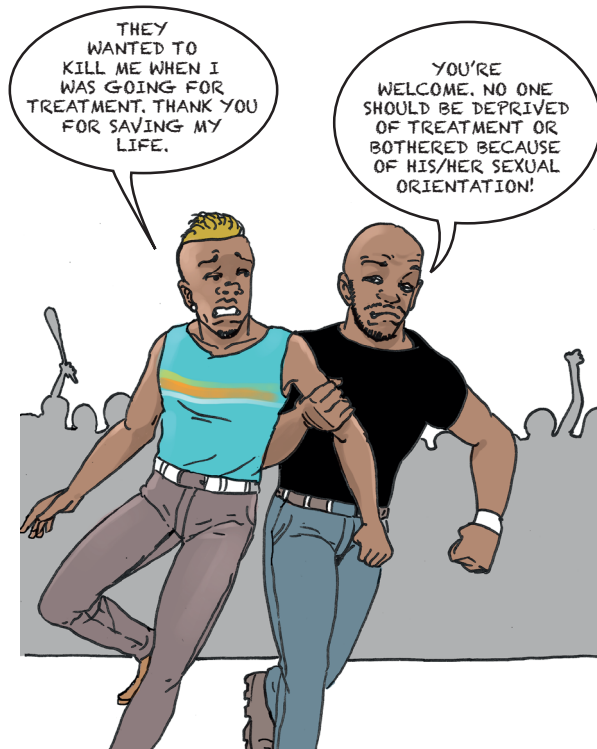
I remain human who loves and accepts his/herself as s/ he is.

I can do any work (intellectual or physical).

I can be a member of a support group or a community association.

I can share my status with a trusted person (s) and receive support from others.

I can travel out of the country; in short, I lead a life in every way similar to everyone else.



NA WA-OH !

*Unraveling the truth about
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE*

Why fight against Gender-Based Violence?

Everyone has the right to a life free of violence and abuse. These are my fundamental human rights

My activity, sexual orientation, identity and serological status do not determine my existence or condition my belonging to humanity. Do not take away my dignity as a human being

The law condemns violence and violation of my serological status.

I can receive legal assistance at community-based organizations (CBOs) or through allied lawyers.

The perpetrator is an aggressor. I must denounce violence and abuse of which I am a victim.

What are my rights?

As a Cameroonian, it is my right to access health care services.

Violence and abuse increase the risk of HIV infection; they isolate people and prevent them from accessing care and treatment.

I have the right to health, to timely access to satisfactory health care services that are of good quality and are affordable.

I do not have to be afraid or ashamed to seek treatment in a hospital, regardless of what I am suffering from.

The CHAMP Project offers good opportunities and guarantees confidentiality for various services offered the key populations through «Drop-In-Centers» (DICs) that operate in Yaoundé, Douala and Bamenda.

For further inquiry, contact:

CHAMP Project Office

CARE International in Cameroon

Sic Hippodrome, Villa La Rose (First floor)

40, Street # 1079 (Quartier Hippodrome)

P.O. Box 15126 Yaoundé – Cameroun

Telephone: + (237) 222 22 38 01 / + (237) 222 22 38 02

Email: contact1.@carecameroun.org

Even a good “sugar daddy” or client does not have all rights over me

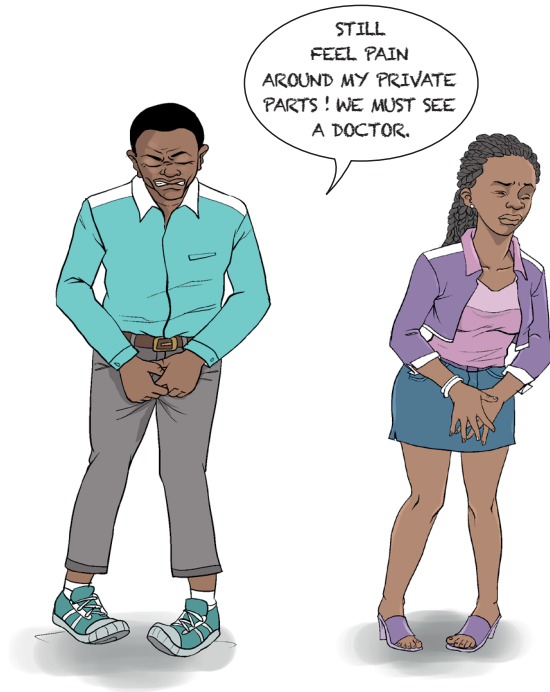
My physical and moral integrity has no price.

I have the right to be respected and to refuse sexual practices that expose me to STIs/HIV or endanger my life.

I have the right to insist on wearing a condom with all my sexual partners.

Maltreated or abused, I must report my perpetrator to the security or appropriate human rights structures found in my community.

I must avoid situations, especially risky appointments, which may favor or blackmail my status, my sexual identity or my activity.



NA WA-OH !

Unraveling the truth about Sexually Transmitted Illnesses (STIs)

What are the types of STIs I can contract ?

In addition to chlamydia, everyone can contract herpes, chancre, syphilis, genital condyloma.

Viral and sexually transmitted diseases such as condyloma can affect both men (penis and testicles, seen around the anus) **as well as women** (vulva or inside of the vagina).

Condoms are relatively ineffective in avoiding contamination. They cannot guarantee total protection against genital condyloma.

I must avoid sexual intercourse, even when protected with people with wounds/injuries on the genitals (sores, painless growths, etc).

I must avoid sexual intercourse in obscure and dark places, because I might not see the wounds/injuries of my partner.

If there are lesions on the genitals, I have to go to a hospital or to the nearest DIC.



NA WA-OH !

Unraveling the truth about CONDOMS

Why is the male condom reliable?

The consistent and correct use of condoms is a sure way to protect against HIV/AIDS and STIs.

HIV cannot survive outside the human body.

Health products intended for Cameroonian consumers are subject to several controls, the first of which takes place at the moment of arrivals at the port, by highly specialized and certified laboratories (ANACOM and CENAME).

Unexpected checks can be carried out at any time.

For all these reasons, it is impossible for the virus to survive in a condom.

Condom protects against HIV; if properly used, it cannot contaminate me.

Condom is used together with a water-based lubricant to prevent tearing/breakage.

Why is female condom reliable and adaptable?

Female condom does not cause pain to a woman.

Female condom correctly used **does not cause any pain.**

In rare cases the internal ring can cause discomfort in case of a particular anatomical characteristic (retro or anterior uterus, ablation). In this case, I have to go to the hospital or use another method of prevention (male condom).

If I feel pain, it may be a sign of a sexually transmitted illness. Thus, I have to go to a hospital or the nearest Drop-In-Center (DIC) for a medical consultation.

Female condom can also be used in the anus. In this case, remove the ring from the inside.

Contacts:

CHAMP Project Office

CARE International in Cameroon

Sic Hippodrome, Villa La Rose (First floor)
40, Street # 1079

P.O. Box 15126 Yaoundé – Cameroun

Telephone: + (237) 222 22 38 01 / + (237) 222 22 38 02

Email: contact1@carecameroun.org



CHAMP

CHAMP Project

Continuum for Prevention, Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS with Most at-risk Populations.

The project aims to reduce HIV/STI infections and related morbidity and mortality, and to ease the impact of HIV on the socioeconomic development of Cameroon, by strengthening the technical capacity of government and civil society geared towards implementing evidence-based prevention, care and treatment services and stigma reduction with key populations (KPs) in Cameroon.

