



# Monitoring Tests

## T Cell Count (CD4 Count)

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### What are T-Cells?

- T cells are cells that are part of your body's immune system. The immune system helps your body to fight off diseases. Without an immune system, you would get sick very easily from germs around you such as bacteria and fungi. T cells are also called CD4 cells.

### What are T4 cells (also known as CD4 cells)?

- T4 cells are a subset of your body's T-cells, they help keep your immune system strong and your body healthy.

### What is a T4 (CD4) Count?

- The T4 (CD4) Count is a blood test that measures the number of T4 (CD4) cells in your blood. It tells you how healthy your immune system is and how much damage the HIV virus has done to your immune system. As disease progresses, your T4 (CD4) count will become lower.
- On the average, a healthy person has over 500 T4 (CD4) cells in every microlitre (0.001 c.c.) of blood. However, your T4 (CD4) count may vary even during the same day, and may change as a result of many factors, including other infections you have at the moment, your stress level, recent immunizations etc. Therefore, you need to have a few T4 (CD4) counts over time to get a better sense of how healthy your immune system is.
- The T4 (CD4) Count also comes as a percentage. The average percentage of T4 (CD4) cell count in a person with healthy immune system is over 30%

### What is the relationship between HIV and my T4 (CD4) Cells?

- HIV is the virus that many believe to be the cause of AIDS. When the HIV virus enters your body, it must enter a cell to live and reproduce, a favourite type of cells in your body that the HIV virus like to attack is the T4 (CD4) cells.
- When the HIV virus enters your T4 (CD4) cells and reproduce, your T4 (CD4) cells will die.
- As the amount of HIV (Viral load) in your body increases, the amount of T4 (CD4) cells will decrease.
- When your T4 (CD4) cells become low, your body is less able to fight off infections. You will have a higher risk of getting sick.

### What can I do to help increase my T4 (CD4) count?

- HIV treatments and medications can help reduce the HIV virus and increase your T4 (CD4) cells. Having good nutrition, adequate rest and controlling your stress will also help your body to become healthier.



### When should I start HIV medications?

- When your T4 (CD4) counts is somewhere between 350 and 200 cells, you may want to start taking HIV medications.
- When your T4 (CD4) counts are below 200 or 20%, your chance of getting other infections and diseases will be greatly increased, if you have not started treatment by that time, you should definitely consider starting then.

### What is the difference between T4 (CD4) count and Viral Load?

- The T4 Count and Viral load are both blood tests that give you information about your health and how the HIV virus has affected your body, but they tell you different things.
- The T4 (CD4) count tells you how healthy your body's immune system is. It tells you how much damage the HIV virus have done to your immune system. It can warn you about risks of getting other diseases.
- The Viral load tells you how active the HIV virus is in your body. It tells you how fast the virus is reproducing itself. It can also give you information about whether your HIV medications are working.

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