

# VMMC Mobiliser Guide



STIs • HIV • Hygiene • MMC • FAQs



# Contents

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)	2
HIV: What you need to know	5
Hygiene: What you need to know	15
MMC: What you need to know	16
Frequently Asked Questions	20

# Notes for facilitator:

- 1) Introduce yourself as a community health worker and say you want to talk about the health of the person you are talking to.
- 2) Listen to the person's issues and concerns.
- 3) Make sure that you have the person's name and that you use it often in the conversation to build trust and familiarity.
- 4) Be open to talking about any issues that the person may have and ensure that you get back to him or her with any questions / advice that they ask for if you don't know the answer.

Throughout the document you will find question prompts like the example below. If at all possible please take the time to address these questions with the client.



## LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR HEALTH CONCERNS

It is essential for a man to take care of his sexual health for his own and his partner's wellbeing. This includes taking care to prevent sexually transmitted diseases such as drop and HIV.

- 1) How concerned are you about STIs? [Go to page 2](#)
- 2) How worried are you about HIV? [Go to page 5](#)
- 3) How concerned are you about hygiene and cleanliness? [Go to page 15](#)

# 1 Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):

## What are STIs and how are they caused?

- ✔ STIs are caused by germs transmitted during unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex or through sharing sex toys.
- ✔ These germs can either be a virus, like HIV, or a bacteria, like syphilis. There are many different kinds of STIs, and they have different treatments.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)



**Gonorrhoea**



**Chlamydia**



**Herpes**



**Syphilis**



**Genital Warts**



**Penile Cancer**

## SOME COMMON SYMPTOMS OF STIs:

SYMPTOMS FOR MEN	SYMPTOMS FOR WOMEN
Pain during sex.	Pain during sex.
A discharge or drop from the penis.	Abnormal vaginal discharge.
Sores, blisters or rashes.	Sores, blisters or rashes.
Burning or pain when urinating.	Burning or pain when urinating.
Swollen glands in the groin.	Swollen glands in the groin.
Swollen, painful testicles.	Unusual vaginal bleeding.
Discharge from the anus or sores or rashes around the anus for men who have anal sex with men.	Discharge from the anus or sores or rashes around the anus.
Pain in the lower stomach.	Pain in the lower stomach.
Fever.	Fever.
Itching or bad smell.	Itching or bad smell.
Can't pull the foreskin back if you have always been able to do so.	



Do you have any of these symptoms, or any concerns about STIs?

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE AN STI:

- ✓ **Go to the clinic immediately** to get the right treatment.
- ✓ Some STIs are **curable**, which means that medicine can remove the infection.
- ✓ Some STIs are **treatable**, which means that they never go away completely, but the symptoms can be controlled and the medicine can stop you infecting anyone else, like HIV.
- ✓ Tell your sexual partner/s so that s/he can go for a check-up. If you treat your STI and s/he doesn't, you will be re-infected if you have unprotected sex.

## WHY YOU MUST TREAT AN STI:

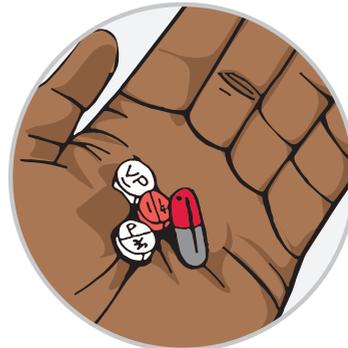
- ✔ STIs give HIV an easy way to enter your body through sores on the genitals.
- ✔ STIs can cause pain during sex.
- ✔ STIs can cause infertility, liver and brain diseases.
- ✔ STIs can cause cancer; for instance, the human papillomavirus (HPV) is an STI that can cause cervical cancer in women, and cancer of the penis in men.
- ✔ STIs can infect babies during pregnancy or childbirth.

## HOW TO PREVENT STIs:

- 1** Use a male or female condom correctly every time you have sex.



- 2** Have MMC to remove the foreskin. The foreskin collects the germs that cause STIs.

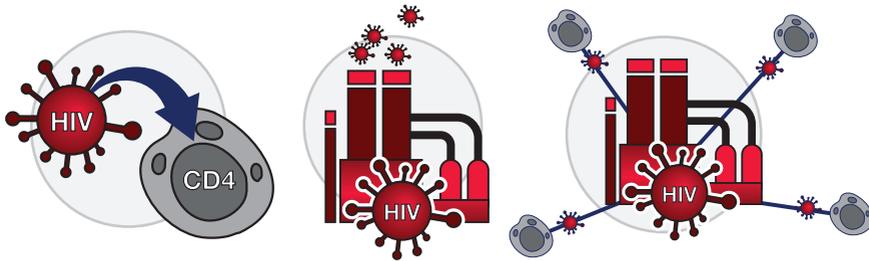


- 3** Treat STIs immediately with your partner.

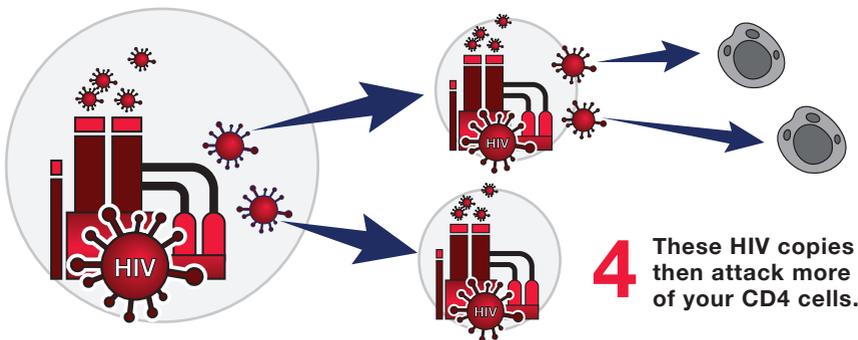
## 2 HIV: What we need to know

- ✓ HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. If left untreated, HIV causes what we know as AIDS, which refers to the diseases that we get when our immune system is damaged by the HIV virus. These diseases can include TB or meningitis.
- ✓ AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.
- ✓ A person who has HIV and does not take ARVs can develop AIDS.
- ✓ HIV weakens a person's immune system by destroying the CD4 cells, which are the soldier cells that protect the body from infection.
- ✓ When HIV infects a person, it turns CD4 cells into factories that make more copies of the HIV virus.
- ✓ You can have HIV in your body for years before you get sick. In that time there is a high risk that your immune system can be damaged and that you can infect your sexual partners.

### HOW HIV SPREADS



- 1** HIV attacks your CD4 cells
- 2** and turns them into factories
- 3** that make more copies of the HIV virus.



- 5** Every CD4 cell (soldier cell) infected by HIV is destroyed. This can damage your immune system if you do not take ARVs.

## HOW DOES HIV ENTER THE BODY?

- 1** Having unprotected vaginal or anal sex with a person who is living with HIV



oral sex



anal sex



vaginal sex



penile sex



- 2** Sharing needles or things that cut the skin, like razor blades



- 3** Mother-to-child transmission during pregnancy, childbirth or through breastfeeding if the mother is not on ARVs

## WE CANNOT BE INFECTED BY HIV THROUGH

- ✓ Touching or kissing a person with HIV
- ✓ Sharing toilet seats, plates, cups or knives and forks used by a person living with HIV
- ✓ Eating food cooked by a person living with HIV



Kissing



Hugging



Cutlery



Toilet Seat



Food

## HOW TO USE A CONDOM



### STEP 1:

Check the expiry date and make sure the package is sealed with no air escaping from it.



### STEP 2:

The penis must be erect before you roll the condom on.



### STEP 3:

Open the package carefully, making sure not to damage the condom. Do not use teeth or nails to open it.



### STEP 4:

For an uncircumcised penis, make sure the foreskin is pulled back.



### STEP 5:

Make sure the condom is the right way up so that it unrolls easily.



### STEP 6:

Pinch the air out of the tip of the condom as this may cause a bubble which can burst during sex.



### STEP 7:

Unroll the condom as far as it will go to cover the shaft of the penis.



### STEP 8:

Use only water based lubricants such as KY Gel. Non-water based lubes may cause condom breakage. Only apply lube after the condom is on, never before.



### STEP 9:

When pulling out hold the condom at the base and pull out while you are still erect to stop it from slipping off your penis.



### STEP 10:

Wrap the condom in toilet paper and throw away in the rubbish bin. Do not flush it down the toilet.

## WHAT BEHAVIOURS INCREASE OUR RISK OF HIV?

### Multiple sexual partners

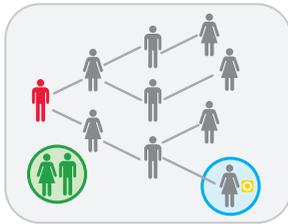
The more sexual partners you have, the greater the risk of HIV, because we do not know if our partners are having unprotected sex with other people.

For example, in these pictures we follow different couples. The green couple are in a relationship and are faithful to each other. The blue woman insists on using condoms and so she is protected from infection. Look what happens to the red HIV positive man and his sexual partners and their sexual partners. With each unprotected sexual encounter the HIV spreads further.

In the space of four weeks nine people have been infected with HIV. The only people who escaped infection were the faithful couple and the woman who insists on using a condom.

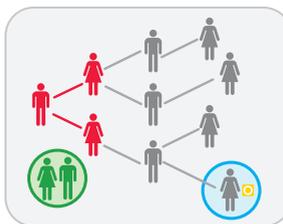
**We can protect ourselves and our communities if we limit the number of sexual partners we have, use condoms and have MMC.**

Week 1:



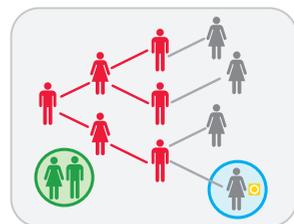
A man is infected as he has unprotected sex.

Week 2:



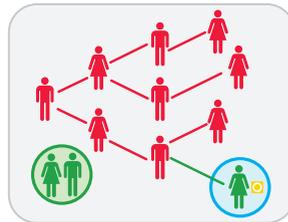
He has unprotected sex with two women and infects both of them.

Week 3:



These women infect three other men by engaging in unprotected sex.

Week 4:



By week four three women are infected with HIV. The fourth woman is not infected because she insisted on using a condom.



An infected person.



An uninfected person.



A couple that has sex only with each other has a very low risk of HIV infection.



A woman that uses a condom.

## OTHER BEHAVIOUR AND HIV RISK

**Alcohol and drug abuse:** Alcohol and drugs lower our control over our behaviour. If we are drunk or high we are more likely to make a mistake using a condom, use a condom incorrectly, only use a condom for one round, or not use a condom at all.

**Violence:** There is an increased risk of violence and abuse if we are drunk or high. Many women are infected by HIV through rape or forced sex with a stranger, someone they know or their long-term partner. Children are also at increased risk of abuse if the people around them are drunk or high.

It is important to drink responsibly and avoid drug use to avoid these problems



How much do you drink?



Do you use drugs?



Do you need help with either?



## YOU CAN PREVENT HIV INFECTION BY FOLLOWING THESE SIMPLE RULES:



Get treatment immediately if you have an STI.



Go for MMC: If a man has his foreskin completely removed, he lowers the risk of HIV and STI infection for himself and his partner.



Always use a condom when you have sex – this protects both partners from STIs, HIV and unplanned pregnancy.



Have one sexual partner.



Limit drug and alcohol use.



Take **PEP** (Post Exposure Prophylaxis): If a condom breaks, or you fear you have been exposed to HIV infection **AFTER you have had sex**, you can prevent HIV infection by going to the clinic and asking for medication called PEP. This is an ARV that you must start within 72 hours (three days) of exposure to HIV. It has to be taken every day for 28 days.



Take **PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)** consistently if you are involved in risky sexual behaviour or have a partner who refuses to use condoms. PrEP is an ARV that must be taken daily to prevent HIV infection. It must be taken for 28 days before it is effective.



**If you are HIV positive**, start ARVs as soon as possible to stop HIV multiplying in your body and to lower the risk of infecting other people.



**If you are living with HIV and you are pregnant or breastfeeding**, take ARVs daily to prevent infecting the child.

**A woman living with HIV can have an HIV negative child if she does the following:**

- ✓ Makes sure that she takes ARVs daily.
- ✓ Makes sure that the baby receives Nevirapine syrup for the first six weeks.
- ✓ Follows medical advice on how to feed the baby. If the mother has a low viral load – which means she has very little HIV in her blood – she will be advised to breastfeed her baby **EXCLUSIVELY** for six months. This means that the baby has nothing besides the mother's breast milk: no muthi, no medicine, no water and no other food.



**OR**

- ✓ If the mother does not think that she can manage exclusive breastfeeding, she must feed the baby with formula. This means the baby must only get infant formula and no breast milk at all. The baby can also be given water and medicines prescribed by a doctor.

**One of the best ways to prevent HIV infection is through correct and consistent condom use. The more partners you have, the higher the risk of exposure to HIV, so it is best to have one partner and continue to use condoms.**



**Do you fear that you are at risk of HIV infection?**



**What do you think the risk is and how can you manage the risk?**

## KNOWING OUR HIV STATUS: WHY HIV TESTING IS THE BEST THING WE CAN DO FOR OURSELVES AND OUR SEXUAL PARTNER

If we want to live in an HIV-free society, each and every person living in South Africa needs to know their status, and take ARV treatment if he or she is positive. If we do this we can stop the spread of HIV in our communities and we can control it in our bodies.

The risks of not knowing your status are:

- ✔ You can infect the people you love.
- ✔ Your immune system can become weak and you are at risk of TB and other diseases.
- ✔ If you delay treatment until you are sick, the treatment may not be strong enough to stop the HIV virus from spreading in your body.



The only way to know your HIV status is to have an HIV test.

You CANNOT use your partner's HIV status to know your own HIV status. Remember that even though there are millions of people living with HIV in South Africa, the majority of people are negative. We should never let fear of a positive status stop us from testing.



**Have you been tested?**



**How do you feel about knowing your status?**

### What if I test negative?

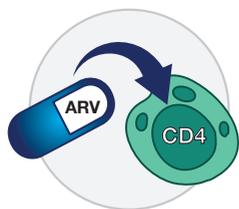
You need to test again after six weeks to make sure that you are not in the window period, which is the time between exposure to HIV infection and the point when the test will give an accurate result. When your negative status is confirmed, commit to remaining negative:

- ✔ Have MMC if you are uncircumcised or are only partially circumcised to lower your risk of HIV and STI infection.
- ✔ Have one sexual partner.
- ✔ Use a condom correctly whenever you have sex.

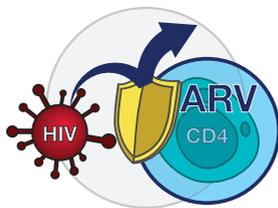
### What if I test positive?

Remember you are not alone and most people living with HIV are supported by their loved ones. The most important thing is to find support, accept your status and start ARVs immediately.

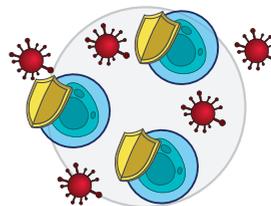
## HOW ARVs WORK



**1** When you take ARVs



**2** the ARVs act as a shield to protect your CD4 cells from the HIV virus.

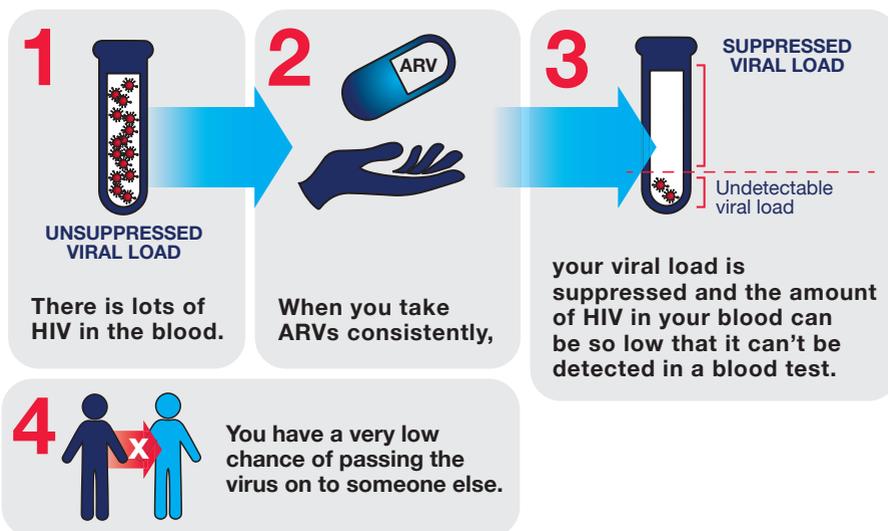


**3** HIV is still in your infected cells, but the virus can't infect your protected cells and spread.

ARVs will keep you healthy and protect your sexual partners. After six to twelve months of taking ARVs you will become virally suppressed. Viral suppression means that the HIV in your blood is undetectable. It is still there, but there is a very small amount.

## WHEN YOU ARE VIRALLY SUPPRESSED:

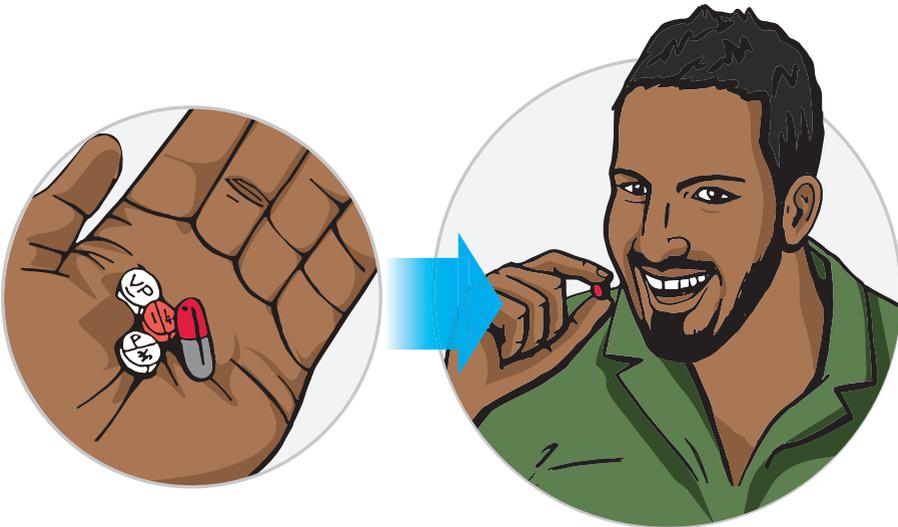
- ✓ HIV is not harming your body, which means you can live a long and healthy life.
- ✓ There is a very low chance of passing the virus on to a sexual partner.
- ✓ If you are living with HIV you can have HIV negative children without passing HIV on to your partner.
- ✓ There is a very low risk of passing the virus onto a child if you want to have a baby.



**For ARVs to be effective you need to adhere to your treatment.  
This means:**

- ✔ Decide on the best time of the day to take your medication so that you get used to taking it. Don't stress if you take it a little earlier or later – what matters most is that you take it every day.
- ✔ Avoid taking other medication that might interfere with ARVs unless it is prescribed by a medical doctor.
- ✔ Medicine prescribed by a traditional healer can interfere with ARVs. Please check with your health professional before you start any traditional treatment.

**ARVs are the only way to suppress HIV and to stay healthy if you are living with HIV. If you stop taking your ARVs, HIV will take the chance to start making copies of itself again and this will make you sick.**



**TO MANAGE HIV:**



Know your status



Use condoms whenever you have sex



Take ARVs if you are positive



Have MMC if you are not circumcised

### 3 Hygiene: what you need to know

- ✔ Often the foreskin cannot be cleaned completely because it is very sensitive. We often can have a strong smell from the foreskin because even though we wash, the germs are on the skin.
- ✔ Research shows that most women prefer sex with a man who is circumcised, because he is cleaner and healthier.
- ✔ The skin on the foreskin is soft and it can cut and bruise very easily.
- ✔ When we have sex there is a lot of rubbing of the foreskin, and that can create scratches or wounds.
- ✔ If there is a sore or wound, you are opening the door to infections, such as HIV or an STI, to enter your body.

**MMC helps you stay clean and healthy.**



**Do you have any health and cleanliness issues?**



## 4 MMC: What we need to know

**Medical Male Circumcision (MMC) is the complete, permanent removal of the foreskin through a medical procedure.**

In some cultures the foreskin is only partially removed. To get the greatest health benefits of MMC it is important that you know whether you are fully or partially circumcised.

### **Circumcision offers a lifetime of benefits for men and their partners.**

The foreskin is like a sponge that can attract viruses and germs that cause HIV and STIs, which most of us call drop. Full circumcision has many benefits:

- ✓ A lower risk of certain STIs.
- ✓ A lower risk of HIV infection.
- ✓ It is easier to keep the penis clean after circumcision.
- ✓ Many women prefer sex with circumcised men.
- ✓ Reduced risk of cervical cancer for women.
- ✓ Reduced risk of penile cancer' for men.
- ✓ There is no bruising and tearing during sex.
- ✓ It is easier to use a condom.

The disadvantages of being uncircumcised or having an incomplete circumcision are:

- ✓ The foreskin bruises and tears easily during sex, giving HIV and STIs a way to enter the body.
- ✓ The foreskin covers the head of the penis, and it is harder to keep clean.
- ✓ There is a higher risk of exposure to the human papillomavirus (HPV) which increases women's risk of cervical cancer and men's risk of penile cancer.

**Are you uncircumcised, partially circumcised or fully circumcised?**



**Uncircumcised**

The entire foreskin is intact.



**Partially circumcised**

Only a part of the foreskin has been removed or a slit has been cut in the foreskin.



**Circumcised**

The entire foreskin has been removed.



**Identify which picture applies to you?**

## BENEFITS OF MMC TO WOMEN: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- ✔ The human papillomavirus is a sexually transmitted virus that is the leading cause of cervical cancer and can also cause other cancers, such as vulva, vagina, penis, anus, and the back of throat.
- ✔ Both men and women can transmit and be infected with HPV.
- ✔ Women exposed to HIV are at greater risk of cervical cancer.
- ✔ HPV can lead to genital warts.



**Do you think you could benefit from MMC?**

## WHAT MMC DOES NOT DO:

- ✔ Being circumcised does not mean that one can or should stop using condoms. MMC **REDUCES** the risk of HIV and STIs. It does not remove it 100%.
- ✔ MMC does not reduce the risk of HIV infection if you have anal sex.
- ✔ MMC does not reduce the risk of HIV infection to your female partner if a man is already HIV positive.
- ✔ MMC does not prevent unplanned pregnancies.

## WHAT HAPPENS AT THE MMC CLINIC?

Have a meal before you come to the clinic. If you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs we can't perform the MMC. This is what will happen at the clinic:



### STEP 1:

You will join a group discussion with a health professional to talk about MMC and your health.



### STEP 2:

A counsellor will offer you an HIV test. The test is voluntary. We encourage you to test so that you can take control of your health and know your status. If you are positive, we will refer you to somebody who will help you start treatment and support you.



### STEP 3:

A health professional will screen you for STIs and TB and do tests to measure your blood pressure, pulse, breathing and blood sugar to make sure you are healthy enough to be circumcised.



### STEP 4:

You will receive an injection into your groin to numb the penis. Men say this is like being pricked by a thorn or stung by a bee. The injection will prevent pain during the MMC. The health professional will perform the circumcision. It takes about 20 minutes.



### STEP 5:

A health professional will bandage your penis and check your blood pressure.



### STEP 6:

A health professional will give you pain killers and explain how to take care of your wound.



### STEP 7:

Two days after the procedure you must return to the clinic so the bandage can be removed and your wound checked.



### STEP 8:

Seven days after the procedure you must return to the clinic for a check-up.

## AFTER CIRCUMCISION: HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

Your doctor will normally recommend resting for two days after the procedure and then you can return to work.

The wound heals fast, but it can tear easily because the skin is weak. If you tear the wound it will take longer to heal. Avoid sex and masturbating for six weeks to make sure the wound is properly healed. Having sex before six weeks can increase chances of infection and cause complications. It is best to discuss your decision to go for MMC with your partner and to ensure that they support your decision.

### Men worry that they will have erections during the healing process.

It helps to put ice or cold water on the penis to stop the erection. It's important to drink lots of water so you can urinate often to relieve the erection.



#### Weeks 1 and 2

- ✓ Remember to visit the clinic on day 2 and day 7.
- ✓ Wear clean, tight-fitting underwear to keep your penis pointing up towards your stomach to prevent swelling.
- ✓ Clean your wound daily once the bandage is removed with gentle soap and water.
- ✓ Stay away from hard exercise like lifting weights, running, soccer or rugby.
- ✓ Avoid work in dirty environments.
- ✓ The wound will start closing in about five days, and the stitches start falling out by themselves after 10 – 14 days.
- ✓ Do not put any substances on the wound such as herbs, muthi, drugs, or other remedies as this can cause infection.



#### Weeks 3 and 4

The stitches will fall out and you can start exercising again. Continue to clean the wound gently.

#### Weeks 5 and 6

The wound will feel like it has healed completely, but the skin is still weak and can tear easily, so avoid sex and masturbation.

Problems after MMC are rare, but sometimes there can be bleeding, swelling and pain. With proper care, these issues are easily treated. Go to your clinic or doctor immediately if you are worried, or call or send a 'please call me' to the 24-hour MMC Helpline and speak to one of our nurses. The number is **082 808 6152**.

# Frequently Asked Questions

How much will MMC cost?	Circumcision is FREE for any man living in South Africa whatever his HIV status.
Is it better to do MMC in summer?	You can have MMC anytime of the year and the wound will heal just the same as long as you follow instructions for wound care.
How much does MMC hurt?	Most men say that MMC is much less painful than they expect and that they can easily manage the pain.
Can my child go for MMC?	Our programme will only circumcise boys over 15.
Can I have free MMC if I am HIV positive?	Yes. Any man in South Africa is entitled to free, safe circumcision.
If I test at the MMC clinic and they find I am HIV positive, will they send me home?	The health professionals will check your CD4 count. If it is low, it could affect your healing, and so the health professional may suggest that you start treatment before you have MMC.
If I have MMC, will I miss work?	You will receive a medical certificate from the clinic so that you can stay away from work for two days. If you work in a dirty environment or do very heavy work, the health professional may recommend that you take additional days off.
Am I too old to circumcise?	No one is too old to circumcise.
Will MMC change the size of my penis?	No, the size of your penis will remain the same after MMC.
Where do they take the foreskins after surgery?	The foreskin is destroyed at the hospital crematorium.
Will I last longer in sex after MMC?	Many men find that they do last longer because there is no pain or rubbing of the foreskin. Research shows that circumcision does not affect sexual satisfaction, the ability to have erections, and it does not cause pain during sex. MMC makes it easier to use a condom.
Is a man or woman going to cut me?	We have male and female health professionals in our programme. All health professionals are trained to a high standard.
What if I have an erection when I am being treated by a woman?	It is extremely rare for men to have erections in a medical environment.
What if the woman health professional is looking at my penis in a sexual way?	Women health professionals are trained to treat any part of a person's body without making personal judgements. They are trained to deliver a safe and caring service on any part of the body.



## **REMEMBER: WE ARE HERE TO CARE FOR YOU**

Always keep the number of the MMC Helpline on your phone.

You can call the 24-hour MMC Helpline or send a free 'please call me' and speak to one of our nurses.

**082 808 6152**