

# Greater predicted life expectancy confirms importance of HIV/AIDS treatment

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Since the introduction of the first antiretroviral therapy (ART) drug for HIV/AIDS treatment 35 years ago, life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa has steadily increased. ART medications are specifically designed

to help an individual's immune system fight HIV and in turn suppress HIV replication. However, there is a limited understanding of the combined effects of HIV and ART on disability and healthy longevity for individuals with the disease.

Investigators from the Brigham and Women's Hospital have collaborated alongside international partners in South Africa to compare people with both virally suppressed and unsuppressed HIV, with people who were uninfected with HIV. The team used data they collected in an observational, longitudinal, population-based cohort study that included baseline interviews and blood collection, as well as subsequent follow-up interviews and blood collection about four years later.

Their modeling analysis found that those receiving ART medication were predicted to live considerably longer and with less disability than those with unsuppressed HIV. Now published in *The Lancet HIV*, this research illustrates the role of ART in [healthy aging](#), as well as the continued importance for international global health organizations to provide HIV treatment to those all over the world, including in Africa.

"It was exciting for us to find that—at the population level—achieving high rates of viral suppression among people with HIV will not only lead to increases in [life expectancy](#) but also to healthier aging," said senior author Jennifer Manne-Goehler, MD of the Division of Infectious Diseases. "This confirms the critical importance of maintaining support for antiretroviral programs as a way to ensure the best long-term health outcomes for people growing older with HIV."

**More information:** Differences in healthy longevity by HIV status and viral load among older South African adults: an observational cohort modelling study, *The Lancet HIV* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/S2352-3018\(22\)00198-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-3018(22)00198-9)

Provided by Brigham and Women's Hospital

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