



Eliane

Facts about HIV

- HIV is short for Human Immunodeficiency Virus.
- Without medication – Anti-Retroviral Therapy – the HIV infection weakens the body's immune system, ultimately leading to AIDS.
- With medication the virus is being suppressed and immunity is restored. People with HIV who take medication as prescribed can no longer pass on the virus to their partners, can have healthy children and breastfeed, and live as long as people without HIV.

HIV is not AIDS

This is the third column on living with HIV in The Netherlands, explaining the difference between HIV and AIDS. HIV is a virus. AIDS is the advanced phase of an HIV infection, when the immune system is so damaged that a number of severe health conditions occur.

Jennifer and I have been friends for years. She does my hair, even long before I was open about my HIV status. Her kids go to school next to my boys' school. Patricia has kids at that same school. One day I saw Patricia with a nice hairstyle and I asked her if she could do it for me. I gave her my business card so she could contact me for an appointment. I waited for two months. One morning I saw Jennifer and Patricia and I waved at them.

Patricia reacted, surprised: "Hey Jen, do you know that lady?"

Jennifer: "Yes, she is a good friend of mine! Why?"

Patricia asked Jennifer if she knew what I have. Jennifer was curious to know what I might have. Patricia whispered: "She has that thing, you know... She has AIDS, don't get close to her. She asked me to do her hair and she gave me her card.

When I googled her name I found out she has AIDS. I never called her back. I don't dare to touch her hair!"

Jennifer smiled and answered: "My friend Eliane does not have AIDS! She has been living with HIV for many years. We were friends before I knew her status and nothing changed since I know. And I did not get HIV just because of being her friend or doing her hair!"

When Jennifer told me this, we discussed how we could help Patricia to overcome her fear. We decided to have a chat at the school playground. So, one day I was greeting them with a happy voice. Jennifer and I hugged, like if we had not seen each other for years! Then I went to hug Patricia just as I did Jennifer. She hugged me with a smile. We exchanged nice compliments and then went back to the usual school mothers conversations.

From that day on it became normal to chat. Jennifer had explained Patricia about HIV and AIDS. I know that every time I educate one person, this person will spread the word. HIV is a virus which causes AIDS when the person is not treated in time. With medication HIV is just a chronic condition and people can live up to old age. Patricia knows the difference now.

Patricia will be happy to do my hair if I ask her to.

Hiv Vereniging

The Dutch Association of People Living with HIV (Hiv Vereniging) represents the interests of all people with HIV in the Netherlands, irrespective of background.

We provide information about living with HIV and organise all kinds of meet-ups.

Servicepunt

Our team of expert volunteers can be contacted for any question about living with HIV, by telephone on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 14:00 – 22:00 hrs, or by email: servicepunt@hivvereniging.nl.

See www.hivvereniging.nl



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