



plain and simple facts

DRUG INFORMATION



CD4+ (T4) Cell Count

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.

What are CD4+ (T4) cells?

- CD4+ (or 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 CD4+ count?

- The CD4+ count is a blood test that measures the number of 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 CD4+ count will become lower.
- On average, a healthy person has over 500 CD4+ cells in every microlitre (0.001 litre) of blood. However, your 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 CD4+ counts done over time to get a better sense of how healthy your immune system is.
- The CD4+ count also comes as a percentage. The average percentage of CD4+ cell count in a person with healthy immune system is over 30%.

What is the relationship between HIV and my 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 cell in your body that the HIV virus likes to attack is the CD4+ cell.
- When the HIV virus enters your CD4+ cells and reproduces, your CD4+ cells will die.
- As the amount of HIV (viral load) in your body increases, the amount of CD4+ cells will decrease.
- When your 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 CD4+ count?

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

CD4+ (T4) Cell Count

When should I start HIV medications?

- When your CD4+ count is somewhere between 350 and 200 cells, you may want to start taking HIV medications.
- When your CD4+ count is below 200 or 20%, your chance of getting other infections and diseases will greatly increase. If you have not started treatment by that time, you should definitely consider starting then.

What is the difference between CD4+ count and viral load?

- The CD4+ count and viral load are 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 CD4+ count tells you how healthy your body's immune system is. It tells you how much damage the HIV virus has done to your immune system. It can help 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.

Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.



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