

# IMMUNE RECONSTITUTION SYNDROME (IRS)

Some people who start ARV treatment at very low CD4 counts can get ill soon after starting. This is often a result of a condition called Immune Reconstitution Syndrome (IRS).



I got sick with TB after starting ARV treatment because the TB that was sleeping in my body took a chance to wake up as my immune system began to recover. Taking ARVs and TB treatment at the same time is difficult. There are many pills and the medicines can have side effects. But I continued to take ARVs and finished all my TB medication which cured my TB. I still take my ARVs and am well and healthy again. We must campaign for new TB medication and better tests to diagnose TB.

-Rodrick Clarence

## When you start ARV

**medication** your immune system gets stronger. This can cause germs that were sleeping in your body to wake up too. This is called Immune Reconstitution Syndrome (IRS). Some people become ill with TB, Pneumonia, Cryptococcal Meningitis or generally feel sick because of IRS.

## IRS is not a side effect

**of ARVs** and does not mean your ARVs are not working for you. You must be treated for the condition or illness you have and be monitored properly at a hospital.

## IRS can be managed

and most people do recover with treatment. Families must get a full explanation about HIV, its treatments and why people sometimes do not survive despite having started ARV treatment.

## Make sure

a thorough medical examination is done before you start ARVs. All clinics and hospitals should have medicines to treat Opportunistic Infections.



TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN

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Plan for Life: Get Tested - Get Treatment - Use Condoms