HIV-Associated MND
(Mild Neurocognitive Disorder)

How to recognise the signs and symptoms
Now that effective treatments for HIV are available, there has been a steady decline in the number of people with HIV-related dementia. However, between 30% to 60% of people with HIV may get much milder mental symptoms, known as mild neurocognitive disorder (MND), from the virus.¹

Regardless of your HIV blood results (viral load and CD4 count) you may be at risk of MND. This is because the virus can have a toxic effect on the brain, and unfortunately not all of the drugs used to treat HIV penetrate the brain equally.

MND is NOT dementia, and is potentially very treatable.

Many people are worried that mild mental problems will develop into dementia. However, for the majority of people this will not happen. But it is still important that you identify the symptoms of MND in its early stages rather than ignore them and hope they’ll go away.

These symptoms develop gradually. You may think you are well, but as the changes are not sudden they can be difficult for you to immediately identify.

Also, some of the signs of MND can be misread as depression, getting older or being more stressed. In some cases, it is only when you and your partner, family or friends look back that these subtle changes are obvious.
Don’t Panic!

Simply be aware of any changes in your mental state so that you can get effective treatment early.

If you notice any changes in your mental abilities, even if you don’t think they are really important, you should talk to your healthcare professional.

In a short routine appointment you may not be asked about your mental health, so bring this subject up if you have any concerns at all.

Following are some questions you can ask yourself

You may need to think carefully about your answers and look back over time to see if you have noticed any changes.

Sometimes these changes are very slow and subtle, so it may help to ask people who know you well if they have also noticed any changes.
• Do you have to concentrate more to get the same things done?

• Are you slower at doing usual tasks?

• Are you feeling more mentally under pressure that usual?

• Do you find you are less accurate with tasks than in the past?

• If you get distracted in the middle of doing a task, do you find it difficult to return to it?

• Do you get more distracted than in the past and then forget what you were going to say next?

• Have you or others noticed that sometimes you go off at a tangent in conversations?

• Do you find that you sometimes need to re-read information to understand it?

• Is it more difficult to do several things at once, such as watching TV and having a conversation at the same time?
• Have you noticed you don’t go out socially as much as you used to?
• Do you have a reduced interest in social things?
• Are you less socially motivated that you used to be?
• Are you less talkative in conversations?
• Are you now more irritable with others?
• Does it take more effort to concentrate on conversations, with your mind sometimes wandering?
• Do people find you are less expressive than you used to be?
• Do you find it more and more difficult to remember things, such as appointments or taking your medications?

• Do you find you can’t quite remember something, although it is on the tip of your tongue?

• Have you noticed an increase in losing track of what you were going to do, such as walking into a room but forgetting why you went there?

• Have you found you are losing track in conversations?

• Do you more frequently lose things such as your mobile phone, keys or forget where you parked the car?

• Do you need to use a diary or electronic reminders more often than in the past to remind you of appointments?

• Are you now more likely to forget special days, like birthdays?

• Are you making more mistakes at work, such as forgetting to return phone calls or getting the times of meetings mixed up?

• Do you use reminder notes more than you used to?
• Do you find that sometimes you have difficulty doing up buttons or buckles?
• Are your keyboard skills not as good as they used to be?
• Are you more clumsy than normal?
• Has your driving got worse?
• Have you noticed that your writing has become messier? Has there been a change in your signature?
• Do you trip more often?

• Are you now putting off important tasks?
• Do you find that you are more tired, both mentally and physically, by the end of the day?

If you have answered Yes to a number of these questions, then you should speak to your regular healthcare professional about your concerns. Further inquiries or tests may need to be made, as there are other possible reasons for these symptoms aside from HIV.
Handy Hints if you’re diagnosed with HIV-Associated MND

- Allow more time to do tasks to avoid time pressures
- Do tasks in shorter bursts of time
- If you are getting tired or losing concentration, stop what you are doing, have a break and come back to it
- Focus on one task at a time
- Break problems down into smaller parts before you think about them
- Make lists to remind you of things to be done
- Use memory aids, such as a diary or electronic reminders for things you need to do or a medication box for your tablets
- Take notes in meetings, of conversations and important information you need to remember
- Pre-prepare notes for discussion in meetings or appointments
- If possible, try to establish routines
- Try to plan activities ahead of time
- Take time and more care with physical tasks, such as driving
- Discuss these issues openly with your healthcare professional

For further information about HIV-Associated Mild Neurocognitive Disorder, please talk to your doctor. The information in this leaflet was written by Mr Garry Trotter, RMN, Grad Dip Health Science (HIV) and Ms Denise Cummins, RN, Masters in Public Health. The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of AbbVie Pty Ltd or the Publisher. Reference: 1. Grant I. Int Rev Psych 2008;20(1):33-47. AbbVie Pty Ltd. ABN 48 156 384 262. 32-34 Lord Street, Botany NSW 2019. For further information, please call Tollfree 1800 043 460. ® Registered trademark. AU-KAL-2013-17 April 2013