



GILEAD

| HIV

*"Effective treatment
for my HIV means
I can be absolutely
confident I won't
pass it on to
my children."*

Sasha



Sasha

is a straight white woman. A mother. A fiancé. And although she lives with HIV, her family does not.

While Sasha is now comfortable with her HIV status, life did not start out that way.

After struggling to recover from chickenpox, a blood test confirmed that at just 5 years old Sasha was living with HIV. Upon further testing, it was discovered that her mum was also living with HIV and that the virus had been transmitted during labour.

But as such a young girl, the diagnosis was kept from Sasha. Despite a gruelling treatment regime with many complications, the reason that she was taking the medicines was never discussed with her.

It was only at the age of 15 when Sasha was in A&E after breaking her arm that she was finally told by her doctors that she was living with HIV. At this time, Sasha confided in a friend and before long the entire school knew about her diagnosis. After relentless bullying, Sasha left school without sitting her exams.

Sasha's experiences made her shut down and succumb to intense

self-stigma. She would not discuss her status with other people openly and she stopped taking medication. However, in 2005 Sasha found out she was pregnant with her first child. At this point, she took her treatment as prescribed and gave birth to a healthy child who was HIV-negative.

Throughout her life, Sasha has been subject to unacceptable levels of discrimination and stigma from others; she has been quizzed about how she 'got' HIV, told that it was not 'her fault' and despite this, that she 'is not entitled to a normal life, family and kids'.

But now she has had enough. Thanks to the research and advances in the care and treatment of HIV, Sasha lives confidently knowing that she cannot pass HIV on to her family while she remains on effective treatment that suppresses the virus.

And she is determined to let others know about what living with HIV means for people today so that others do not go through the same experiences that she did.

The more we talk about HIV in heterosexual communities and for those wanting to start a family, the more people will understand, and the more lives we can help change.



By Working Together We Can End The HIV Epidemic For *Everyone. Everywhere.*