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Headline: How to keep people on HIV treatment during a flood

Blurb: What happens when there's a natural disaster, like a flood, and people living with HIV aren't able to take their chronic medication? Watch to find out what can be done to make sure their treatment isn't interrupted.

Bullets:

- In KwaZulu-Natal, people living with HIV were doubly affected by the April floods in 2022, which left 448 people dead.
- They lost their belongings like ID documents and medication which meant they couldn't collect their treatment from clinics.
- [Research from Namibia](#) shows that healthcare workers can prepare HIV-positive people for floods by handing out medication in advance when it looks like a flood is about to start, and moving them to clinics closer to their homes.

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In April 2022 South Africa experienced one of its worst floods [since 1987](#).

Heavy rains in KwaZulu-Natal left [448 people dead](#) and more than 8 500 homes destroyed.

[Research shows](#) that people with HIV are especially affected by floods.

How do floods affect people living with HIV?

Floods may wash away belongings such as ID documents or HIV medication.

Public facilities can't give people without IDs medication.

If someone doesn't take their HIV pills, [the virus can multiply in their blood](#). This makes it harder for their bodies to fight off germs.

If they drink dirty water because floods have impaired infrastructure, they may become very ill.

Clinics and hospitals could also be closed down as a result of flood damage, making it difficult to get hold of HIV medication.

Floods may also make HIV infections more likely since people

- May not have access to condoms
- May find themselves in dangerous situations, where rape is more likely

How can we make sure people have access to their medication in a flood?

South Africa's disaster management plans don't do enough to help those with HIV keep taking treatment, experts say.

In the north of Namibia, floods happen often.

The Namibian health department has figured out how to help those with HIV during floods.

How to prepare for the rain

1. When it looks like flooding is about to start, clinics will hand out six months' worth of HIV treatment.
2. Health workers, and non-profits will explain to people what to expect during the floods and how to stay healthy.
3. Patients who can't get to their regular clinic will be referred to facilities that are closer to their homes.
4. Health information is broadcast on the radio and at schools and churches.

This story was produced by the [Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism](#). Sign up for the [newsletter](#).