

## COUPLES-TESTING campaign kicks off

**NEW** Start HIV Counselling and Testing (CT) has embarked on an extensive campaign that uses celebrity couple endorsement to encourage South African couples to test for HIV/AIDS together.

Many couples are apprehensive about asking their partner or spouse to have an HIV/AIDS test with them and this campaign aims to diminish these fears and highlight the importance of couples-testing.

"As Africans, I believe we have a moral obligation to serve and take care of one another. The unfortunate reality is also that you cannot know what your partner's status is and so it is critical to get tested together. Playing Nandipha Matabane in Isidingo has allowed me to

sage and I am better able to encourage thousands of South Africans to know their status," stated Hlubi Mboya, Isidingo star.

New Start HIV CT centres offer the public professional, confidential and accurate HIV/AIDS counselling and testing services. There is no appointment necessary and results are available in under an hour. Couples who come in for testing will be counselled and tested together.

Counsellors who discuss the results with the couples who visit the New Start centres are well trained and the entire process is entirely anonymous. Counsellors answer questions the couples may have and help them to develop a plan to live a long and healthy life, whether they test HIV-positive or HIV-

negative. Counsellors are also willing to offer tips and advice on how to speak to their partner about joint HIV/AIDS testing.

Hip Hop Pantsula, another of the celebrated figures backing the campaign, commented. "I think it is critical that people stop seeing HIV/AIDS as a death sentence. I believe that is only by seeing the disease as an opportunity to live positively that we can beat it. The steps are simple: Get tested! New Start offers an excellent counselling and testing for only R25. You can also get tested with the one you love. Always use a condom. The reality is that even if you know your own status, you cannot assume that your partner has the same status. Be faithful to your partner."

