



# POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Health and Wellness Information for Members

Spring 2013



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## Hepatitis C and HIV

Hepatitis C (Hep C) is a virus that attacks your liver. Almost a third of people with HIV also have Hep C. Most people exposed to this virus have it their whole life. This is known as chronic Hep C. There are not many symptoms of chronic Hep C. Many do not even know they have the virus. If left untreated, it can cause severe liver damage.

Your liver is where most HIV meds are absorbed into your body. Your HIV treatment might not work as well if you have liver damage from Hep C. It can also make the side effects from your meds worse. The good news is that HIV treatment can slow down the liver damage caused by Hep C.

### Things to Know about Hep C

This virus causes your liver to swell. If your liver swells it becomes scarred. This is called cirrhosis [sur-OH-sis]. If you are a heavy drinker or use drugs, your liver is more likely to scar. Hep C causes some peoples' skin and eyes to turn yellow, or jaundiced.

Liver disease and cancers can be more severe in people with HIV and Hep C. Your risk of liver problems from Hep C is increased if your CD4 count is low. It is also harder to treat hepatitis when your CD4 count is low. So you should take your HIV meds at the same time every day. Your doctor will check the health of your liver to see when you should start treatment for Hep C.

### Treatment

You should ask your doctor to be tested for Hepatitis every year. Your risk of liver disease is greatly lowered when Hep C is found and treated. There is no cure for Hep C, but treatment can remove most of the virus from your body. There are many ways to treat Hep C. Most treatments are pills or shots and are taken for 6-9 months.

Not all people need treatment right away. Treatment for people with both HIV and Hep C can be tricky. There can be side effects and a lot of pills to take each day. Your doctor will know the best way to treat both.

### Prevention

Hep C is mainly passed by blood. Protect yourself from the virus. The best way is to:

- Avoid contact with blood
- Do not share needles or drug works (cotton, burners)
- Always use clean needles
- Practice safer sex
- Only use licensed tattoo artists
- Do not share your razor or toothbrush with other people

There is a greater risk of Hep C in HIV positive men who have sex with men. Condoms can help protect you from the virus. There is no vaccine for Hep C at this time. Ask your doctor about vaccines for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. These can help protect you from these other forms of the virus.



P.O. Box 46160  
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Member Services  
Mon - Fri, 8:00am to 8:00pm  
Tel (800) 263-0067  
TTY/TDD: 711



## Share Your Opinion

Your voice counts! This spring you might get a survey about Positive Healthcare in the mail. The survey may ask about your health or what you think about your Health Plan. All of the answers are put together in a summary. Positive Healthcare is not told the details of who said what. Your answers will be private.

Your feedback helps us improve the care and services we provide. One survey that goes out every year is:

- **Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS).** This survey asks you how you feel about your doctors, nurses, health plan and drug program.

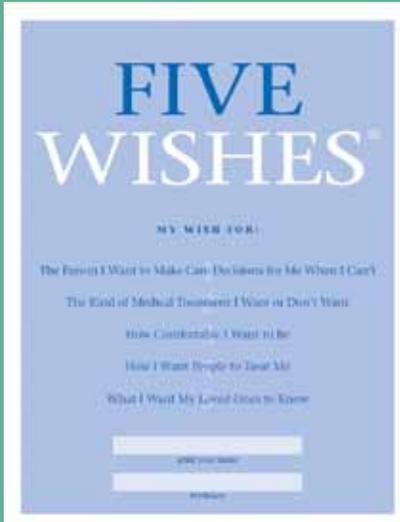
Please take the time to fill out the survey and send it back as soon as you can. Thank you!

## Take Charge of Your Health!

At Positive Healthcare our goal is to provide the kind of care that works for you. Your health care team is your partner in care. You are the most important team member. We want to make sure your voice is heard each step of the way. You and your nurse care manager make an action plan for your health.

This plan lets you choose what changes you are ready to make and how you want to make them. There is another plan to help you manage your medications. Your team can guide you and give you tools to make healthy changes. The action plan gives you power to make positive changes in your life. When you and your nurse care manager agree on your plan, you are ready to take charge of your health.

## Plan to Make your Five Wishes



Five Wishes is a living will, or advance directive. It is a form that names a person you trust to make healthcare choices for you if you are not able to make them for yourself. Your Health Plan makes this easy for you with Five Wishes Workshops to help take you through the form. Choose a day that works for you and sign up for the class. Talk to your nurse care manager or call Jyll at (323) 337-9153 if you want to attend a class.

CA English	CA Spanish
May 30	June 7
Sept 19	Sept 13
Dec 12	Dec 13



## Think About Joining a Trial!

New drug trials and treatment studies start all the time. These help create better treatment for all people living with HIV/AIDS. There are many types of clinical trials. One may be perfect for you. Your doctor may ask you to join a trial. Think about it!

### For more info call:

California: (323) 913-1033



## Language Line Services

Tell your doctor or nurse care manager if English is not the language you speak or if you are deaf or hard of hearing. We can call an interpreter who speaks your language. For your health, it is vital to make sure you and your doctor understand each other. This service is free to you

## A Message from Your Health Plan

### Your Contact Information

Positive Healthcare cares about you and your health. We need to know if you moved or got a new phone number in the past year. Please call Member Services to update your record.

### Member Services

Monday-Friday 8:00am-8:00pm

Tel: (800) 263-0067 TTY/TTD: 711

### Medication Therapy Management Program (MTMP)

As part of Positive Healthcare Partners, you are enrolled in the MTMP. This Program helps people who take many prescription drugs. The Program lowers the chance of medication mistakes and reactions. Your health care team will be in touch with you and your doctor. They will explain the drugs that you take. Your doctor will know of safety issues with your meds. Any other health issues will also be handled. An action plan with your nurse care manager will help with any problems you may have. The action plan will let you know just how and when to take your meds.

### Compliance Hotline

Help us look out for Medicare fraud and abuse. For example, if your Explanation of Benefits lists charges that are wrong, call Member Services. Call our Compliance Hotline if you suspect possible fraud or abuse.

**Compliance Hotline:** (800) AIDS-HIV • (800) 243-7448

## We want to hear from you!

**The Client Advisory Committee is a great way to tell us what you think about your Health Plan! We welcome all Positive Healthcare members and AHF Healthcare Center clients. You can share your questions, concerns and comments with our Health Plan leaders. We use your concerns to make your Plan better. Come to the next meeting to find out what Positive Healthcare can do for you!**

### California - Los Angeles

Tues, March 26, 2012 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Tues, May 28, 2013 6:00pm - 8:00pm

6255 W. Sunset Blvd, 21st Floor

To RSVP, **call Santiago at (800) 243-2101**

**Food and drinks will be served.**

## Questions?

### Contact Your RN Care Manager

Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5:30pm

Tel: (800) 474-1434

### Urgent After-Hours Nurse Advice Line

Mon-Fri, 5:30pm-8:30am and 24 hours on Weekends

Tel: (800) 797-1717

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## Know Your Numbers

You should keep track of your **CD4 Count** and **Viral Load** lab test results. These numbers tell you and your doctor how well your body responds to HIV treatment. A blood test every few months helps keep your health on the right track.

### Definitions:

**CD4 Count** measures how many T-Cells are in your blood. T-cells are a type of white blood cell. They help keep your immune system strong. The higher your T-Cell count is, the better your body can fight HIV.

**Viral Load** measures how much HIV is in your blood. The lower your viral load is, the better it is for your health.

### Take charge of your health!

- See your doctor to check your CD4 count and viral load at least 3 times per year
- Keep track of your numbers over time
- Ask for copies of your labs. Your nurse can print older test results
- Take your HIV medications every day as prescribed

### Your numbers count!

- The goal is to have a CD4 count that is as high as it can be. This means your immune system is strong and can fight HIV
- You want a viral load so low that the test does not pick it up. Less than 20 copies are called an **undetectable viral load**

Track your CD4 count and viral load online! These websites let you print graphs and see your results over time:

- The Body: <https://secure.thebody.com/tracker/intro.html>
- POZ/ Graph My Labs: <http://www.aidsmeds.com/graphs>



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## Tips for Taking Your Meds

HIV medications (meds) are one the best tools to help you live well with HIV. They keep your T-cells high and viral load low. They also lower the chance that you will pass HIV to someone else.

### Take Your Meds at the Right Time!

- **Take them at the same time every day.** It matters that the right level of medication stays in your body all the time.
- **Set an alarm** on your phone or an alarm clock. This will remind you when it is time to take your meds.
- **Find something you do daily and take your meds then.** For example, take them when you brush your teeth in the morning.
- **Plan ahead.** Take your meds with you when you go out. This way you will always have your meds with you, even when you are not at home.
- **Make a plan that works for your life.** Do not plan to take your meds at 8AM if you do not wake up until 10AM.
- **Know how to take your meds.** If the bottle says, “take twice a day;” you should take them 12 hours apart. For example, you could take them at 9AM and 9PM.

### Take Your Meds the Right Way!

- **Have a good system.** Use a pill box. See if your pharmacy has blister packs or baggies. This makes it easy to tell if you miss any meds.
- **Pay attention to what you eat and drink.** Some meds need to be taken with lots of water. Some meds should be taken with food. Make sure you know how to take yours.
- **Find a buddy.** Ask a friend or partner to check-in to see how you are doing. They should ask if you are taking your meds.

### Your Care Team Can Help!

- Be honest! Tell your doctor or nurse about your mental health. It can be hard to take your meds when you are dealing with depression or other issues.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you have problems with alcohol or drugs. They may want to change your meds until you get help.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse if the side effects bother you. They can help you figure out if you should switch meds. Do not stop your meds unless your doctor tells you to.
- Some meds may not work for you. Do not feel like you failed if one option does not work for you. There may be other options. Your doctor can help you find the best treatment for you!



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# The Affordable Care Act:

## How It Affects People Living with HIV/AIDS

In 2010, President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA or ACA) into law. The ACA is also called health care reform. The purpose of the ACA is to help people get access to health care and insurance. It is also designed to improve the health care you receive. The ACA requires every US citizen to have health insurance by 2014.



### Improved Access for Those Who Need It

The ACA will help people with HIV and AIDS in many ways. Before the ACA, almost 1 in 3 people with HIV were not insured.

In the past, if you had a health problem like HIV, you could:

- Be denied insurance
- Be charged a higher rate because of your illness
- Have a lifetime limit on how much plans will cover

Under the ACA, those things are **no longer legal**.

### Medicare Changes

New changes to Medicare will increase the types of care we cover and improve the care you receive. This will help prevent disease and lower costs

### Medicaid Changes

In most states, you will be able to enroll in **Medicaid** based on how much money you make. A disability will no longer be required to be in the program. You can be covered by Medicaid or Medi-Cal if you earn less than about \$14,500 per year for a single person.



If someone makes between \$14,400 and \$30,000 for one person or \$29,300 to \$92,000 for a family of four, they can buy a health insurance

through a system called an **insurance exchange**. The exchange system will be set up through states to offer low cost plans. You will be able to compare plans side-by-side with others in the exchange. Much of what low-income people pay for a health plan can be returned in their tax return or other forms of support.

### The ACA and Positive Healthcare

If you are a member of a **Positive Healthcare** plan, you will continue to get the care you are used to. Positive Healthcare will remain a low-cost Health Plan for our members. The ACA will increase the types of care we can cover. It will help us continue to improve the care you receive.

### A Better Future for HIV

Through free HIV tests and better access to health care, the ACA will help support the National HIV/AIDS Strategy's goals to:

- Reduce new cases of HIV
- Increase access to care and health status of PLWHA
- Reduce the higher rates of HIV in minority groups

## Ryan White Changes

Many people get HIV healthcare through the **Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program**. Since Ryan White only covers HIV care, it is not insurance under the ACA. Most people in Ryan White can apply for Medi-Cal or Medicaid. Ryan White will most likely still exist after the ACA goes into effect, even in states that make it easier for people to enroll in Medicaid. It provides vital social services to illegal immigrants and other people who will not be able to access Medicaid.

**\$15 Billion**  
to Help Keep  
America Healthy



## What to Expect in 2014

If your current coverage is:	
<b>Positive Healthcare Partners or Positive Healthcare</b>	You can keep the health plan you have now
<b>Ryan White</b> * Talk to your Benefits Counselor to learn more about changes to Ryan White	If you are a citizen and your income is below 138% of poverty, you qualify for Medicaid. If your income is 138% - 400% of poverty you can buy a health plan through a state health exchange. You may qualify for help with premiums. Ryan White may still cover some of your health and social support.
<b>No insurance</b>	You can buy a health plan through an exchange or enroll in Medicaid.

States will take action in 2013 to help make sure people are helped and not hurt by the new ACA laws. This map shows where your state stands on health reform:

[http://www.commonwealthfund.org/usr\\_doc/site\\_docs/slideshows/StateAction/StateAction2014.html](http://www.commonwealthfund.org/usr_doc/site_docs/slideshows/StateAction/StateAction2014.html)

## Medication Costs

The cost of your HIV medications from the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) will go toward your out-of-pocket drug costs in Medicare. This will make it faster for you to get past the **coverage gap** or "donut hole" for your meds. By 2020, the donut hole will not exist.

## Improved Care

**When the ACA takes effect in 2014, Medicare and other health plans will cover more services to keep people healthy. Plans will cover things like cancer screenings, help to quit smoking, mental health and tools to manage chronic disease like HIV and diabetes. Many of these will be at no cost to you.**

**For more info:** [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

**For California Members:**

**Covered California Healthcare Exchange:** <http://www.coveredca.com/>

