



Life with HIV

HIV can change your life, habits and bonds with other people. With treatment, a person with HIV can live a healthy life for many years. Scientists continue to work for a cure and better treatment.

When you know that you have HIV, it gives you more power. You have the power to get treatment. You can manage your health issues. And you can protect the people you love.

Protect Your Health

HIV attacks your immune system. This makes it hard for your body to fight diseases. You must take care of your health and keep your body strong.

- Take your HIV medication (meds) every day as your doctor prescribes.
- Eat several small meals during the day. It is easier for your body to use the food it gets. Many small meals will satisfy your hunger. It can also help with nausea.
- Get enough rest. Try to sleep at least 7 hours at night. Talk to your doctor if it hard to fall or stay asleep.
- Reduce stress. You can do yoga, focus on your breath, or do a special task or hobby you enjoy.
- Stay active. Try to exercise at least 30 minutes, 5 days a week.
- Limit alcohol use. If you feel your alcohol use is out of control, talk to your doctor or nurse about programs to control how much you drink.
- Do not smoke. If you smoke, talk to your doctor or nurse about ways to give up the habit.

- Illegal drugs can react badly with your HIV treatment. You can lose control. Your doctor or nurse will know programs that can help you with the choice not to use drugs.

Get Informed

You can make better choices when you know more about HIV/AIDS and the meds that are used to treat it. You will be able to spot problems with side effects of your treatment before they cause trouble. You can watch for signs of a disease that attacks a weak immune system.

Take an Active Role in Your Health Care

HIV gives you a new kind of bond with your doctor. You will need tests and visits more often than a person without HIV does. HIV and its treatment is complex. You need to work as a partner with your doctors, nurses and other healthcare staff to make sure that treatment works as well as it can. Find a doctor you can trust who has worked with people with HIV before.

As a patient, it is up to you to take control of your care.

- Try to keep all your doctor visits.
- Take all HIV meds given by your doctor.
- Tell your doctor about any effects from your treatment.

Women Living with HIV

Women with HIV should be aware of some special issues.

General Health Issues

- Birth control pills, patches, rings, shots or implants may not work as well when you are on HIV treatment. You are more likely to get pregnant even if you use birth control. You should always use condoms to prevent the spread of HIV to a partner. Use birth control and a condom to prevent pregnancy.
- You are more likely to get the human papilloma virus (HPV). This increases your risk for cancer of the cervix. You should have Pap tests to check for changes in the cervix. Your doctor may give you a test for HPV as well.

Pregnancy and Babies

There have not been a lot of studies on the effect of HIV drugs on pregnant women and their unborn babies. If you are on HIV treatment and are pregnant or want to be pregnant, you should talk to your doctor.

- The chance of a pregnant woman with HIV will give the virus to her baby is about one in four (25%) if she is not in treatment. If that woman is in treatment, the risk that she will give the virus to the baby drops to 2%.
- When a baby whose mother has HIV is born, the baby will need to be tested for HIV. The baby will be given medicine to prevent HIV and other types of disease.
- A mother with HIV should not breast feed her baby. The virus can be passed to the baby in the milk.

Living with a Partner who has HIV

If your partner has HIV, you should take care to avoid contact with their blood, semen, vaginal fluid or breast milk, even if you have HIV too. You should avoid contact with the urine (pee) or feces (poop) of a person with HIV. Other germs can be passed through urine or feces

If you can see blood in any body fluid, wear latex, vinyl or sterile gloves that you can throw away. Hands should be washed with soap and water when you take off your gloves after a spill has been cleaned up.

Household items like sports gear, phones, dishes, food, clothes, bathrooms or pools can be shared with people who have HIV. There is no risk of getting HIV this way. A mixture of chlorine bleach and water can be used to clean up areas or items exposed to blood or body fluids. Use a quarter cup of bleach for every gallon of water.

You can also take these precautions:

- Do not share sex toys.
- Do not share drug needles or the works (spoons, cooker, cotton) used to prepare a shot.
- Do not share a razor or toothbrush.
- Practice safer sex. Even if both partners have HIV, safer sex should be practiced. Unsafe sex makes it harder to treat HIV. It also puts you at risk for STDs and other health problems.

For more information

Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call Positive Healthcare's Nurse Advice Line at (800) 797-1717.

