



## Telling Others You Have HIV

It can be hard to know who to tell that you have HIV. You may not want anyone to know. If you let the right people know, it can make you feel better. You will be able to be open and honest about your health and how you feel.

It is vital that you:

- Tell your sex partners your HIV status. This can be very hard. They need to know so they can be tested. They are less likely to spread HIV if they know they have the virus.
- Tell anyone you **plan to** have sex with. Safer sex practice will help protect your health and that of your partners. In some states, not telling a partner you have HIV before you have sex is a crime.
- Tell your doctor and dentist. This helps them give you the right kind of care. Doctors and dentists cannot tell anyone else you have HIV. They cannot refuse to treat you because you have HIV.

Some people may not know a lot about HIV. They may find it hard to accept that you have this disease. Some people may end their friendship with you. Others might be scared about sex and reject you. You really will not know how someone will respond until you tell him or her.

No matter what happens, accept how they react. You cannot control how others deal with the news. How they react says more about them than it does about you.

## Who Do I Tell?

You do not have to tell everyone. You might want to ask yourself:

- Why do you want to tell them? Is there something you want from them?
- How might you make it go better? Would it help to share pamphlets, websites or hotlines?
- How might they react to the news? What would be the best way it could go? The worst? People can react in a lot of ways to this kind of news.
- How much detail do you want to tell them? Some people may ask how you got HIV. It is up to you to decide how much to say.
- Get support from others who have shared their status. Ask your doctor or nurse if you need help to decide who to tell, what to tell and how to tell them.

## What About My Job?

Many people wonder if they should tell their employer. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects people with disabilities from unfair treatment. As long as you can do your job, your workplace is not allowed to be unfair.

If your illness or treatment makes it hard to do your job, you may want to tell your boss. Get a letter from your doctor to explain what you need to do for your health. Talk to your boss. Let them know you want to work. Ask if they can change your hours or workload so you can take care of your health. Make sure that they know you want to keep your HIV status private.

### **For more information**

Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call PHP Nurse Advice Line at (800) 797-1717.

