

HIV AND AIDS

Staying Healthy A Guide for Living with HIV



HIV, or Human Immunodeficiency Virus, is the virus that causes AIDS. Having HIV does not mean you have AIDS or that you will die. HIV is like many other illnesses, in that you can get treatment for it and stay healthy. The most important thing is to see a doctor right away and not wait until the HIV gets worse.

AIDS, which stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is the advanced stage of HIV where a person's immune system cannot defend the body from infection.

>> AFTER YOU LEARN YOU HAVE HIV

Talk with Someone You Trust

It's normal to feel stress, anger, fear, and sadness when you find out you have HIV. Talk with someone who will listen to and support you, like family, friends or your doctor.

Work with Your Doctor

Don't wait until you're sick to find care. Make an appointment now with someone who:

- Listens and cares about your needs
- Is not too far from where you live
- Has experience helping people with HIV/AIDS
 - **HIV Case Manager** – helps you find the HIV care, health insurance and services you need
 - **HIV Specialist** – trained to work with the latest HIV treatments and medicines

>> TAKING HIV MEDICINES

HIV medicines reduce the virus level in your blood and help you stay healthy. That's why it's important to take your medicines regularly.

Learn About Your Medicines

- Tell your doctor about any other medicines you take – including drug store cold medicines – which may prevent your HIV medicine from working the right way
- Know what each drug does and why you take it
- Share any problems you have taking your medicines on schedule
- Don't skip doses or stop taking your HIV medicines because of side effects, which can include upset stomach and headaches
- Ask the pharmacist any medication questions, like:
 - How much to take
 - How often to take
 - Whether you take with food or on an empty stomach
 - If you have to keep the drug in the refrigerator
 - About any side effects

Stay on Your Schedule

- Taking your medicine on time, every day prevents your body from having resistance
- If you are resistant to an HIV medicine, your doctor will have you stop taking it and switch to another
- If you miss a dose, do NOT take a double dose
- Never take a day, "holiday" or a weekend off from taking your medicine
- Set an alarm on your phone or watch for the time you need to take a dose
- Get your refills so you have your medicines

>> TYPES OF HIV MEDICINES

Each Type Works Against HIV in Different Ways

- **NRTIs** – block the first step that HIV takes to spread itself
- **NNRTIs** – also block the first step HIV takes to spread, but in a different way
- **PIs** – block the last step that HIV takes to spread
- **Fusion Inhibitors** – stop HIV from getting into healthy cells
- **Fixed-Dose Combination Drugs** – combine two or three drugs into one, so you have less pills to take
- **Integrase Inhibitors** – block the HIV virus from "breaking into" healthy cells

Rules for Taking HIV Medicines

- **Take Twice a Day** – means take the first dose early in the day and the second dose about 12 hours later
- **Take Three Times a Day** – means you take the three doses about 8 hours apart
- **Take with a Meal/Food** – means at the same time as taking the dose you should eat something, like a meal or a large snack
- **Take on an Empty Stomach** – means you should take the medicine at least one or two hours after you eat a meal or snack

>> HIV-POSITIVE WOMEN AND THEIR BABIES

Women with HIV can pass HIV to their baby while pregnant, during childbirth or through breastfeeding.

- HIV medicines can stop HIV from passing from mother to child
- Ask your doctor about how HIV can affect your pregnancy

>> WAYS YOU CAN STAY HEALTHY WITH HIV

- Quit Smoking
- Avoid or Reduce Use of Alcohol
- Eat Healthy Foods
- Exercise as Much as You Can
- Get Enough Sleep
- Reduce Stress



>> PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM HIV AND STDs

HIV infection is like a chain from one person to another. If you are sexually active or still injecting IV drugs think about how to break the chain and avoid passing HIV to others.

If You are Sexually Active:

- Wear a condom every time you have sex
- Talk to your partners about HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)
- Avoid getting re-infected with HIV, which will make your HIV worse
- Avoid sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs), which can also be spread through oral sex

If You Inject Drugs:

- Use new, sterile needles and syringes, with sterile water every time you inject
- If you reuse injection equipment, only use your own and don't share
- Get new needles and syringes from a drugstore without prescription

>> RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

New York State HIV/AIDS Hotlines (Toll-Free)

English: 1-800-541-AIDS

Spanish: 1-800-233-SIDA

TTY: 711

www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) AIDS Hotlines

English: 1-800-342-2437

Spanish: 1-800-344-7432

www.cdc.gov/HIV

Web Links

- **Medicaid:** https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/index.htm
- **HIV and Injection Drug Use:** <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/9405.pdf>
- **HIV and Pregnancy:** https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/consumers/hiv_basics/pregnancy.htm
- **HIV and Smoking:** <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/9533.pdf>
- **Monitoring HIV Blood Work:** <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/9689.pdf>



Independent Health 24-Hour Medical Help Line*

1-800-501-3439



SOURCE: New York State Department of Health

*Independent Health's 24-Hour Medical Help Line should not be used for diagnosis or as a substitute for a physician.

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