10 Tips For Living With HIV

Surviving and thriving with HIV is a process—but it's easier than you may think.

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1. Know your status. One in every five people living with HIV in the United States don't know they're positive. Protecting your health begins with a simple blood or oral swab test.

2. Connect with a health care provider. Managing HIV involves teamwork. A mutually respectful relationship with your doctor, physician assistant or nurse is a major key to good health.

3. Consider treatment. HIV treatment is easier and safer than ever. Though side effects are possible, treatment prolongs health and survival and reduces the risk of HIV transmission.

4. Take your meds. Skipping doses or not taking your medications as prescribed can have serious consequences. If you're struggling with adherence, talk to your health care provider ASAP.

5. Get the help you need. Need health insurance, housing, income or other types of assistance? Ask for a referral to consult with a social worker or case manager.

6. Learn as much as you can. The more you know about HIV, the better you'll understand why care and treatment are so important. POZ.com is a great place to start.

7. Find support. Surround yourself with family and friends who will be there for you, in good times and bad. Support groups and online discussion boards can also help.

8. Know your legal rights and responsibilities. If you think you've been discriminated against or aren't sure if you're required to disclose your HIV status to sex partners, contact your local HIV/AIDS organization to learn more.

9. Quit smoking. Tobacco use greatly increases the risk of heart disease and certain cancers in people living with HIV. If you're willing to quit, your health care provider can help.

10. Communicate. Your doctor needs to know what's going on in your life. Are you using drugs or alcohol? Taking other meds? Depressed or anxious? Problems sleeping, eating or having sex? The only way your doctor can help is if he or she knows there's a problem.

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