COVID-19 Advice for People With HIV From the Experts Who Know

Interim guidance from HIVMA and AIDSinfo covers lab visits, opioid treatment programs, pregnant women and other HIV-related topics.

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As more data surface regarding COVID-19, the potentially fatal respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus, HIV specialists offer advice tailored to the HIV population.

AIDSinfo, a federal clearinghouse of HIV-related information, published "Interim Guidance for COVID-19 and Persons with HIV" on March 20. It's available online for free and offers general advice to all people living with HIV, guidance for specific populations (such as children and pregnant individuals who have HIV as well as health care workers) and more.

In the section for all people with HIV, AIDSinfo notes that:

- The limited data currently available do not indicate that the disease course of COVID-19 in persons with HIV differs from that in persons without HIV. Before the advent of effective combination antiretroviral therapy…advanced HIV infection [such as when a CD4 cell count is less than 200] was a risk factor for complications of other respiratory infections. Whether this is also true for COVID-19 is yet unknown.
- Some people with HIV have other comorbidities (e.g., cardiovascular disease or lung disease) that increase the risk for a more severe course of COVID-19 illness. Chronic smokers are also at risk of more severe disease.
- Thus, until more is known, additional caution for all persons with HIV, especially those with advanced HIV or poorly controlled HIV, is warranted.

Is it a good idea to go to your clinic or doctor for HIV-related appointments at this time? AIDSinfo advises those with a suppressed viral load and stable health to postpone routine visits if possible. Concerned individuals could instead call their doctor or use telemedicine to replace face-to-face

meetings.

The interim guidance also includes advice for HIV-positive people who develop COVID-19, both when hospitalization isn't needed (continue your HIV treatment and take any other medications as prescribed) and when it is (for critically ill patients who require tube feeding, check with an HIV specialist to figure out the best way to continue an effective HIV regimen).

AIDSinfo is a federal resource of HIV-related information; it's a service of the Department of Health and Human Services funded and supported by several national agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Office of AIDS Research, the Health Resources and Services Administration and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (part of the National Institutes of Health). For more details, check out this AIDSinfo brochure.

Meanwhile, the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), a group of health care providers and researchers involved in HIV/AIDS, and the Infectious Diseases Society of American (ISDA) Foundation, released "COVID-19: Special Considerations for People with HIV." The one-sheet PDF offers advice on social distancing, routine office visits, prescription drug refills, HIV viral load monitoring and more.

POZ also offers COVID-19 content. See "UPDATED: What People With HIV Need to Know About the New Coronavirus" and "#Coronavirus—Click Here for the Latest Continuing Coverage."

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