Treatment Tips

Gina Brown offers these tips to get the most out of your HIV care.

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Remember the three golden rules
1) Attend every doctor's appointment; 2) take your meds exactly as prescribed; and 3) learn everything you can about this virus.

Don't hide what you're going through
If you're depressed, talk about it! Stop thinking everyone's going to judge you. I used to call women on the day they were diagnosed with HIV so they'd have a shoulder to cry on. Hearing my story helped them realized they can still live a long life.

Write down your questions
Keep a daily health journal with what's bothering you—diarrhea, headaches, etc. Then take it to your health care provider. And write down questions you have, plus things your provider tells you. Find out how to best communicate with your provider: Do they prefer e-mail or texting?

Demand explanations from your doc
If your doctor says, "Here, take this med," and just walks away, ask him or her to explain the medication and why you should go on it. Polite persistence goes a long way. It's your doctor's job to make sure you understand the information you're given.

Build a support team
If you don't like your doctor, you may not have many other choices —especially in rural areas—so seek out help elsewhere. (See sidebar, "Finding Support," for tips on how to build your support network.) The more help you have around you, the stronger you are.

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