



HIV in Specific Populations

# Newly Diagnosed? Start Here

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HIV/AIDS.**

Being diagnosed with HIV can be shocking and upsetting, but with proper care, you can live a long and healthy life. Living with HIV can come with challenges, but it's no longer the death sentence it was once perceived to be. Start by working with a health care provider and surrounding yourself with support.

If you're newly diagnosed, start by taking a deep breath. Take the time to learn about HIV and what it means for your health and life. Being HIV positive [does not mean you have AIDS](#), and treatment can prevent disease progression. No matter how fearful, sad or angry you may feel, it can help to start working with a health care provider and surrounding yourself with the support you need.

Here are some tips for the newly diagnosed:

## Get Informed

Knowing the benefits of HIV treatment may help calm your fears. The amount of information can seem overwhelming, but the more you know about HIV, the more empowered you'll be to get the care and treatment you need. [Click here](#) to learn the basics about HIV.

## Find Support

A friend or family member can be a great source of support, but if you're not ready to tell anyone yet, that's OK. ([Click here](#) for tips on disclosure.) Talk to other people living with HIV who can understand what you're going through. Many HIV/AIDS service organizations—search for one at [directory.poz.com](#)— offer support groups and case management to help with your needs. Online support is another option. Check out the [POZ Forums](#), a round-the-clock discussion area for people with HIV/AIDS and their friends, family and caregivers. Facebook and Meetup also offer HIV support

groups.

## Find a Doctor

Establishing a relationship with a health care provider is an essential first step. See a doctor who has experience with HIV care soon after your diagnosis. [Click here](#) for more information about finding a doctor and accessing care.

## Start Treatment

Experts advise that everyone diagnosed with HIV start antiretroviral treatment as soon as possible. Modern [HIV medications](#) are highly effective, more convenient and easier to tolerate than older meds. Many require just one pill a day—or one injection a month. Effective treatment can reduce your viral load to an undetectable level. There's no cure for HIV, so it's important to keep taking your medications as directed.

## Prevent HIV Transmission

People on effective antiretroviral treatment with an undetectable viral load don't transmit HIV to others through sex (known as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable, or U=U). Condoms prevent transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. If you [inject drugs](#), use a new syringe every time. If you're in a relationship with an HIV-negative partner, discuss [pre-exposure prophylaxis](#) (PrEP). If your partner has had a possible exposure to HIV, have them discuss [post-exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\)](#) with a health care provider.

## Figure Out Your Finances

HIV can pose [financial challenges](#). Private health insurance plans, state Medicaid programs and Medicare vary in terms of what they cover and how easy it is to access care. A health insurance plan offered by the Affordable Care Act or care provided through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program may be an option. HIV/AIDS service organizations often have financial navigators, and many drug companies offer [payment assistance programs](#).

## Improve Your Overall Health

An HIV diagnosis can be a good opportunity to take steps to improve your overall health. These include [eating a healthy, well-balanced diet](#), [getting enough exercise](#), [maintaining a health weight](#) and getting adequate sleep. [If you smoke](#), consider quitting. Get tested for other infections, including hepatitis B and C and sexually transmitted infections. Ask your doctor which vaccines you should receive. Many people living with HIV have other health conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart, kidney or liver disease. Work with your health care team to get the appropriate treatment.

## Take Care of Your Mental Health

It's normal to feel anxiety, sadness or [depression](#) after an HIV diagnosis. Exercise, yoga, prayer or meditation can often help relieve stress. Talk to your health care team about mental health resources, including therapists and support groups.

While learning about HIV and keeping yourself and your partners healthy, know that you are not alone in this fight. You can survive and thrive with HIV. [Click here](#) to read inspiring stories of people living with HIV.

The module was created by [d'Vinci Interactive](#) and POZ with funding by the [National Library of Medicine](#) (NLM). NLM's HIV/AIDS Community Information Outreach Program (ACIOP) enables HIV/AIDS service organizations to design local programs that improve access to HIV/AIDS information.

Last Reviewed: February 1, 2022

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<http://beta.docker.poz.com/basics/hiv-basics/newly-diagnosed>