HIV/AIDS

Access to Care

How do I find a doctor?
One of the most important tools that you have in fighting HIV disease is your relationship with your doctor and other health care providers. It's worth spending time looking for the right doctor, and finding one that works for you. If you don't know where to go or who to ask for advice on finding a doctor, then try contacting your local AIDS service organization—they usually have a list of recommended doctors in your area. You can get the name and number of your local AIDS service organization from our online directory.

In addition to treating your HIV, your health care provider or local AIDS service organization can also help you access health care and other supportive services that can help you stay well—physically, emotionally, and financially.

Can I get treatment without insurance?
If you're a U.S. resident and don't have private insurance, such as through an employer, you may be eligible for Medicaid or Medicare. You can also ask an AIDS service organization to help you find a care provider or health clinic that accepts Medicaid or Medicare. In addition, many drug companies have programs to provide medication to people with low income or no insurance. Check with your AIDS service organization; to find one, visit tusaludmag.com/directory.

What if I'm not a legal U.S. resident?
Your AIDS service organization can help you find programs and clinics that provide free or low-cost care or medication to people who are not legal residents. Even without insurance or legal immigration status, you have the right to treatment in the event of an emergency.

What kind of care do I need?
You'll need a doctor with experience treating people living with HIV, and for women, a gynecologist with knowledge in HIV. You may also need to see another specialist, such as a liver doctor (hepatologist) or a cardiologist, if you have another health condition besides HIV.

What should I look for in a doctor?
Remember, your doctor works for you. Here are some things to look for:

- Knowledge and experience: Ask your doctor how familiar he or she is with HIV and how many people living with HIV he or she treats.

- Communication: It’s important to feel comfortable with your doctor. You should feel you can talk to your doctor without being judged, especially about sex, drug use and any problems you’re experiencing with medication. If your doctor does not speak your language, consider finding a doctor who does (or request translation services at all of your appointments).
- Availability: You should be able to get an appointment within a reasonable amount of time, and your doctor should be able to spend at least 20 minutes with you. If something is really bothering you and your doctor cannot see you right away, ask to see another doctor. And if you are experiencing emergency symptoms such as trouble breathing or chest pain (ask your doctor for other urgent signs) go to an emergency room or call 911.

Quick Tips
Many clinics, hospitals and AIDS service organizations (to find one, visit directory.tusaludmag.com) help people with HIV in the following areas :

- Care and Money: Case managers and social workers can coordinate care and help arrange medical, financial and legal support.
- Medicine: Pharmacy services work with you, your doctor and your insurance provider to monitor your meds and avoid dangerous drug interactions.
- Diet: Nutritionists can advise you how to improve your diet, especially if you’re having difficulty maintaining your weight or having problems with cholesterol, triglycerides or blood sugar.
- Language: Translators are vital for those who don’t speak English or are deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- Dental/oral health: Referrals to dental care are important for people with HIV, who may be at higher risk for dental and oral problems.
- Mental health: Referrals to mental health specialists are crucial if you’re struggling emotionally or suffer from depression. Ask your case manager or doctor for referrals to a counselor or psychiatrist. Untreated, depression can interfere with your care and treatment.

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