HIV/AIDS

Newly Diagnosed

Being diagnosed with HIV can be shocking and incredibly upsetting, but with proper care and treatment, you can live a long and healthy life. This is not to say that living with HIV doesn't come with challenges, but it is no longer the death sentence it was once perceived to be.

If you're newly diagnosed with HIV, start by taking a deep breath. No matter how afraid, sad or angry you might feel, you will feel better as you start working closely with a health care provider and begin surrounding yourself with the support you need.

Here are some tips for the newly diagnosed:

Find Support

A friend or family member can be a great source of support when you're feeling upset and confused about your new diagnosis. Of course, it's not easy to predict exactly how people will respond to your news—even if you've known them for years. Consider choosing one or two people you think might best handle the news. If you're not ready to tell anyone about your diagnosis, that's OK. See below for info on how you can get connected to others.

Find a Doctor

Establishing a relationship with a health care provider is an essential first step for people living with HIV. But finding someone you can trust and whom you feel comfortable with isn't always an easy task. It's important to be open and honest about your needs because your relationship with your health care team will play a big role in your staying healthy. As soon as possible after your HIV diagnosis, it's important to see a doctor who specializes in HIV care.

Get Informed

Knowing the benefits and risks of HIV treatment may help calm any fears you may have. Learn about your options, including when to start treatment and what drugs are available. The more you know about HIV, the more empowered you'll be to get the care and treatment you need to survive and thrive. Visit POZ.com to learn about the basics of HIV.

Get Connected

Even if you have the support of friends and family, you might also consider joining a group specifically for people who were just diagnosed with HIV, to find out how others handled the news. Many AIDS service organizations (ASOs)—search for one at directory.tusaludmag.com—offer

support groups, along with other professional services, such as drug recovery programs and treatment education workshops, along with case management to help with legal, financial or housing obstacles that might be in your way.

For those who find comfort in online support, check out the POZ Forums, a round-the-clock discussion area for people with HIV/AIDS, their friends/family/caregivers, and others concerned about HIV/AIDS. You'll find other people living with HIV who can offer words of wisdom and encouragement.

Prevent HIV Transmission

Learn about the ways to avoid passing on HIV to anyone else:

- Take medication. Taking antiretroviral medication reduces your viral load and reduces the likelihood of passing on the virus to someone else.
- Use condoms. When used consistently and correctly, condoms can effectively prevent HIV transmission.
- Talk to your partner about PrEP and PEP: If you are in a relationship with an HIV-negative partner, discuss pre-exposure prophylaxis (PreP) as an option to prevent transmission. If your partner has had a possible exposure to HIV, have your partner discuss post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) with a health care provider.
- Don't share injection drug equipment: Use new, sterile syringes and needles every time you inject. Many areas offer needle-exchange programs.

While reading and familiarizing yourself about HIV, keep your chin up. Know that you are not alone in this fight, and that you can survive and thrive with HIV. Click here to read the inspiring stories of people living with HIV.

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