

Living with HIV



If you have HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), you are not alone. More than one million people in the United States have HIV. HIV passes from person to person through blood or bodily fluids (from your penis or vagina) during unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex.

With HIV, your body's immune system becomes weak and less able to fight off infections and cancers. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). While there is no vaccine for HIV and no cure for AIDS, there are treatment options to help you manage them so you can live a full life.

Treating HIV

Your goal for treating HIV is to prevent symptoms for as long as possible. Signs of HIV may include flu-like symptoms in early-stage infection, and weight loss, diarrhea and fever in later-stage infection.

Once you start taking medicines to treat HIV, it's important to keep taking them—and to take them at the right time. HIV medicines need to be taken at very specific times, multiple times a day, for best results and to help avoid some negative side effects.

HIV medicines are called antiretroviral therapy, or ART. You might need to take a combination of three or more different medicines. These medicines help prevent the HIV virus from attacking your immune system to help keep you healthy.

Find the Right Doctor

Treating HIV can be complicated, so it's important to learn as much as you can about HIV and your treatment options. It's also important to find a doctor you're comfortable with and who you trust. You'll be working closely with him or her to develop a treatment plan that works for you.

Find a doctor who is an HIV specialist and who encourages you to take an active role in your treatment. You'll want to weigh the benefits and risks of different treatments so you can make decisions to best maintain your quality of life. And talk to your doctor about new treatments that might be available.

Managing HIV

There are also lifestyle changes you can make to help stay healthy:

- **Take care of yourself.** Eat a nutritious diet full of whole grains and lean meats, as well as five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables each day. This will help give you energy and keep you at a healthy weight. It will also help your medicines work better by keeping your immune system strong. And don't smoke cigarettes or abuse alcohol.
- **Be active.** Try to get some physical activity for 30 minutes a day, at least five days of the week. You can do things like walk, jog, swim or practice yoga. Exercise can improve your mood, energy level and overall health.
- **Get enough sleep.** Most adults need seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
- **Stick to your treatment plan.** Follow your doctor's instructions, don't skip appointments, and take your medicines exactly as your doctor prescribes.



- **NEVER skip doses of your HIV medicines.** Skipping doses of your HIV medicines can put your immune system at risk. It can give the virus a chance to change into another type of HIV virus. This means your HIV medicines might not work to treat it.
- **Talk to your doctor about vaccinations.** Yearly vaccinations can protect you from flu, pneumonia or other infections.
- **Get support.** An HIV/AIDS support group can be a place to share your concerns and lean on others who have HIV or AIDS and understand what you're going through.
- **Get help for depression.** Having depression can take a toll on your health and put your immune system at risk. Counseling and antidepressants can help.
- **Be safe about sex.** Learn about how HIV spreads during sexual activity. Be honest with your sexual partners and always use condoms during sex. It's important to use condoms even if your partner also has HIV. You can get infected again with another type of HIV virus.



To learn more, visit
**HealthyAdvice.com/
HIVinfection**

You can also visit these
websites:

- **AIDS Info**
(US Department of
Health and Human
Services)
www.aidsinfo.nih.gov
- **The AIDS InfoNet**
www.aidsinfonet.org
- **Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov
- **Social Security
Administration**
Benefits for people
living with HIV/AIDS
www.ssa.gov

AIDS

Having HIV doesn't mean you have AIDS. If you follow your treatment plan and take care of yourself, you may not have AIDS for many years. Doctors and researchers continue to find new medicines to treat HIV, and maybe one day to cure HIV and AIDS. Try to stay hopeful and lean on a support network of friends, family, doctors, counselors and others who have HIV.

Remember:

- HIV weakens your immune system and makes it harder for you to fight infections.
- Find a doctor you trust who specializes in treating HIV.
- Take an active role in your care and learn about HIV and your treatment options.
- Stick to your treatment plan, and take your medicines as your doctor prescribes.

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