

# Supporting Someone with HIV

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## How Can You Help Someone Who Has Been Newly Diagnosed with HIV?

There are many things you can do to support a friend or loved one who has been recently diagnosed:

- **Listen.** Being diagnosed with HIV is life-changing news. Listen to your loved one and offer your support. Be available to have open, honest conversations about HIV. Follow the lead of the person who is diagnosed with HIV. They may not want to talk about their diagnosis or may not be ready. They may want to connect with you in the same ways they did before they were diagnosed. Do things you did together before their diagnosis; talk about things you talked about before their diagnosis. Show them that you see them as the same person and that they are more than their diagnosis

## SUPPORTING SOMEONE WITH HIV

- ✓ **Listen** to their needs
- ✓ **Learn** about HIV
- ✓ **Encourage** them to start HIV treatment as soon as possible
- ✓ **Support** medication adherence



CONDITION. [HIV.gov's HIV Basics pages](#) are an excellent source of information to familiarize

yourself with HIV. Have these pages available for your newly diagnosed friend if they want them. Knowledge is empowering, but keep in mind that your friend may not want the information right away.

- **Encourage medical care and treatment.** Some people who are recently diagnosed may find it hard to take that first step to getting into HIV medical care. But the best thing people with HIV can do for their health is to get into care and start [treatment with HIV medicine](#) as soon as possible. By starting HIV medicine, sticking to a treatment plan, and staying in care, people with HIV can reduce the HIV in their blood to an undetectable level. That's a level so low it can't be detected in a standard test. People with HIV who take HIV medicine exactly as prescribed and get and keep an undetectable viral load **can live long and healthy lives and will not transmit HIV to their HIV-negative partners through sex.** Encourage your loved one to see a doctor and start HIV treatment as soon as possible. If they do not have an HIV health care provider, you can help them find one. Use HIV.gov's [HIV Testing Sites & Care Services Locator](#) to find one nearby. There are also programs that can help with [paying for HIV treatment and care](#).
- **Support medication adherence.** It's important for people with HIV to take their HIV medicine exactly as prescribed. Ask your loved one what you can do to support them in establishing a medication routine and sticking to it. Also ask what other needs they might have and how you can help them stay healthy. Learn more about [treatment adherence](#) and get [tips for sticking to a treatment plan](#).
- **Get support.** Take care of yourself and get support if you need it. Turn to others for any questions, concerns, or anxieties you may have, so that the person who is diagnosed can focus on taking care of their own health. But always respect the privacy of the loved one with HIV.

If you are the sexual partner of someone who has been diagnosed with HIV, you should also [get tested](#) so that you know your own HIV status. If you test negative, talk to your health care provider about [PrEP](#) (pre-exposure prophylaxis), taking HIV medicine to prevent HIV. PrEP is recommended for people at risk of getting HIV, including those who are in a relationship with a partner who has HIV who is not on treatment and does not have a [suppressed viral load](#). If you test positive, get connected to HIV treatment and care as soon as possible.

## What If a Friend Tells You That They Have HIV?

has had HIV for some time and has just told you,

here's how you can be supportive:



- **Acknowledge.** If someone has disclosed their HIV status to you, thank them for trusting you with their private health information.
- **Ask.** If appropriate, ask if there's anything that you can do to help them. One reason they may have chosen to disclose their status to you is that they need an ally or advocate, or they may need help with a particular issue or challenge. Some people are public with this information; other people keep it very private. Ask whether other people know this information, and how private they are about their HIV status.
- **Reassure.** Let the person know, through your words or actions, that their HIV status does not change your relationship and that you will keep this information private if they want you to.
- **Learn.** Educate yourself about HIV. Today, people with HIV who take HIV medicine as prescribed can get and keep an undetectable viral load, stay healthy, and will not transmit HIV to their sexual partners. Don't make assumptions and look to your friend for guidance.

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