

What to Do After Finding Out You Have HIV

If you just found out you have HIV, you probably have questions about what comes next. It's important to start treatment as soon as you can — and there's lots of support available to help you lead a long, healthy life.

Find a doctor

The first step is to find a doctor or nurse you trust to manage your care.

If you already have a primary care doctor (a doctor who manages your regular health care), they might know enough about HIV to treat it. If they don't know a lot about HIV, they can refer you to an HIV specialist.

There are other ways to find an HIV doctor, too:

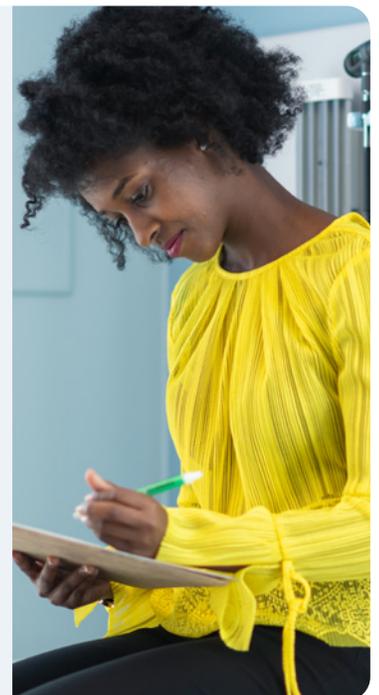
- Go to locator.hiv.gov and enter your city, state, or ZIP code
- Call your state's HIV/AIDS hotline — you can find the number at hab.hrsa.gov/get-care/state-hiv-aids-hotlines

Get ready for your first appointment

Once you make an appointment with an HIV doctor or your usual doctor, it's a good idea to get ready ahead of time. Before you go:

- Write down any questions you have for the doctor
- Make a list of symptoms or problems you're having
- Make a list of any medicines you're taking
- Get a copy of your medical records if the doctor doesn't have them already

Bring all of these things with you, and be ready to talk honestly with your doctor. That way, they'll have the information they need to help you stay healthy.





Start treatment

It's important to start taking medicine to treat HIV — called **antiretroviral therapy (ART)** — as soon as possible. ART lowers the amount of HIV in your blood, and it can make the amount so low that you can't pass HIV to other people.

Starting HIV medicine — and sticking with your treatment plan — is the best thing you can do to stay healthy. **Talk with your doctor about HIV medicine. Together, you can decide on a treatment plan that works for you.**

Tell others you have HIV

It's also important to tell your current or past sex partners that you have HIV. And if you use drugs, you need to tell anyone you've shared needles with. That way they can make decisions to protect their own health.

Having these conversations can be really hard. If you need help, check with your local health department. They may be able to reach out to your partners and provide them with HIV testing and other services.

Keep in mind that in some states, the law requires you to tell your sex partners and people you've shared needles with that you have HIV. But telling anyone else is your choice.

Get support

Finding out you have HIV can feel overwhelming, but remember that you're not alone. Talking about it with your family, friends, or a support group can help you manage your stress and decide on next steps.

Ask your doctor about support groups you can join in your area.

To learn more about HIV, visit:
nmlm.gov/guides/HIV-AIDS-Online-Resources