

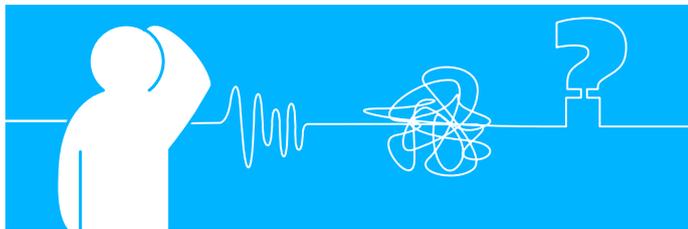
ABOUT HIV

Living with HIV

For most people, being diagnosed with HIV is a life-changing experience. Finding out that you have HIV is likely to have emotional and practical implications.

But it also means that you're in the best position to look after your health, including accessing HIV treatment. There are organisations all over the world that provide support to people who have HIV.

Finding out that you have HIV can be upsetting. This series of factsheets may help by giving clear, factual information, and reassuring you that life does go on.



First reactions

People react in many different ways when they hear that they have HIV. You might carry on as if nothing has happened, you may search out lots of information, or you might find it difficult to accept the news.

You may blame yourself. But HIV does not infect people because they 'deserve it' – having HIV does not mean you are a wicked, immoral or stupid person.

Many people get HIV from a sexual partner. You might not have known about HIV at the time, or not thought you were at risk, or you might have decided not to worry about it for once. All these are very normal, human things to do.

You may blame someone else. If you think you know who passed HIV on to you, you may understandably feel angry with them.

But they may not realise that they have HIV. Very often, HIV is passed on by people who have only had it for a few months themselves, usually without knowing.

Or they may have known and not told you. Perhaps things would be better if they had done. But many people are afraid of telling others,

because they feel ashamed, or are worried about being rejected. It's not easy to tell, but a factsheet in this series gives advice on this.

Get medical care

Medical care for HIV happens in a wide range of hospital and other medical settings, depending on where you are in the world. The best treatment and care for HIV is often at specialist HIV clinics.

In the UK, these are provided by the National Health Service (NHS). The treatment and care provided by these clinics will be free, whatever your financial situation or immigration status. You can choose where you receive your HIV care – you don't have to go to your local hospital.

Attending your clinic appointments is important and, if you are on HIV treatment, then taking it properly is a very important part of staying well.

Get support

Living with HIV can be hard at times, and most people need the help of others from time to time. Don't be frightened or embarrassed to ask for help.

You may find that a lot of support is available from the place where you get your HIV medical care. As well as medical staff, they may have staff who can help you come to terms with your diagnosis or talk to you about any problems you are having.

Counselling and support may also be available from local HIV support organisations.

Carry on

HIV doesn't have to stop you from carrying on with the rest of your life. Many people living with HIV take more care of their health than they did before. Some people go through a period of adjustment, and reconsider their priorities.

But most people living with HIV do carry on with their jobs and their usual activities. HIV shouldn't stop you from having relationships, having children or making plans for the future.

The development of www.pro-vich.info and www.about-hiv.info has been made possible thanks to generous support from Janssen. Our funder has had no editorial control over the content of either site. The information on this site is intended to support, rather than replace, consultation with a healthcare professional. Talk to your doctor or another member of your healthcare team for advice tailored to your situation.

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For more information: www.about-hiv.info; www.pro-vich.info; www.aidsmap.com

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