



How to Cope with a Positive Diagnosis

You feel many ways when you learn you have HIV. Fear, worry, anger, and sadness are all common. One way to fight the fears about HIV and AIDS is to learn as much as you can. This lets you take care of yourself and make good choices about your treatment.

Talk to your doctor if you see changes in how you sleep, eat, or focus on things. This could be a sign that you are depressed. Talk to your doctor if you feel like you may hurt yourself or someone else. There are treatments that can help if you are depressed or worried.

Go to the most up-to-date sources to learn more. This could be your doctor or nurse, or through national and local HIV/AIDS groups. Support groups and talking to people you trust can be very helpful.

With treatment, people with HIV can live long lives.

How HIV Becomes AIDS

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. When you are HIV positive you have been exposed to and infected with the virus. AIDS stands for acquired immune deficiency syndrome. These are the health problems you may have when the virus has been in your system for a while.

HIV infection is different from AIDS disease. In truth, HIV has many stages. AIDS is the last stage of HIV. HIV can move through these stages at a slow or fast pace.

Studies show that when people with HIV do not get treatment, about half will get AIDS within 10

years. Three out of four with no treatment will have AIDS within 15 years after they get the virus.

Children who are born with HIV and people who got HIV through a blood transfer tend to get sick at a faster pace.

The stages of HIV tend to follow the pattern in the table below. The stages can change a great deal from person to person:

Time After Infection	Stage
3 to 6 months	HIV spreads in the body. An HIV test is able to pick up the presence of the virus.
1 to 10 years	Person has HIV and could be healthy
3 to 10 years	Minor symptoms of a disease that attacks a weak immune system may appear
8 to 12 years	Symptoms of AIDS begin to appear

When HIV Becomes AIDS

AIDS is the last stage of HIV. A doctor can tell you when your HIV has become AIDS. The Centers for Disease Control have rules to define AIDS.

Since 1996, there are strong drugs that fight HIV. These medications (meds) slow down HIV. This helps stop it from turning into AIDS. Other new treatments help fight the kinds of illnesses that people with AIDS have more often.

HIV treatment does not cure AIDS. It does not prevent the spread of HIV. HIV meds let you live a longer and better life with HIV.

As HIV grows in your body, it attacks your immune system. Your immune system is how

your body defends itself against disease. When your immune system is weak, it is hard to fight germs and disease like a normal immune system. Opportunistic infections are types of illness you get when your immune system is weak. When you take HIV meds, you can go a long time before you get this type of infection.

Some common infections for people with HIV and AIDS are:

- Cryptosporidiosis (Crypto)
- Cytomegalovirus (CMV)
- Hepatitis C (Hep C)
- Human papillomavirus (HPV)
- Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC)
- *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP)
- Toxoplasmosis (Toxo)
- Tuberculosis (TB)

You can take charge of your health!

- Take all of your HIV meds at the right time, every day
- Keep appointments with your doctor
- Know your CD4 count and viral load
- Practice safer sex
- Stop illegal drug use
- Work out five days a week
- Get enough sleep

For more information

Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call Positive Healthcare's Nurse Advice Line at (800) 797-1717.

