

FACTS ABOUT CARE

1. I feel like I'm alone.

As you adjust to living with HIV, it is important to keep in mind that you are not alone. No one should face an HIV diagnosis all by themselves. You can find help at your local AIDS service organization (ASO). These are agencies with case managers who work confidentially to help individuals with HIV get the help they need.

Call the Ohio HIV/AIDS/STD Hotline at 800-332-2437 to find an ASO near you.

2. Where should I turn for help?

- Case managers can help coordinate the mental health and physical care you need, and get you connected with assistance (such as applying for Medicaid and disability insurance and help paying for medications).
- Medical facilities with health care providers who have experience treating HIV are very important to your health care.
- Classes or workshops can provide you with more information about HIV, taking your HIV meds properly, nutrition, fitness and other important issues.
- Support groups can give you a place to regularly meet and talk with other people with HIV in your area (some organizations even offer specific support groups for drug users, gay men, women, recently diagnosed people, and so on).
- HIV prevention counseling may offer free condoms and discussions about how to protect yourself from other sexually transmitted diseases while also ensuring you don't pass HIV to others.
- Counseling is available for mental health issues or substance abuse.
- Volunteering gives you a way to help prevent the spread of HIV and help those who are infected with HIV.

3. I feel good. Why should I stay on my medicine?

It is important to stay on your medication even if you are feeling well. Research has shown that people become ill more rapidly if they stop their medication. Without treatment, your virus can mutate, leaving your health care provider with fewer medication choices for you in the future. If you have side effects from your medications, stay on them and talk to your health care provider to see if other adjustments to your treatment regimen can make the medications easier to take.

4. Do I need protection if the virus is undetectable?

One laboratory test often given to those with HIV is a viral load test. An "undetectable" result on this test is a measure of how effectively your medicines are working to reduce HIV in your blood. The virus can still hide out in your body, so it is important to make safer sex choices with a positive partner even when their viral loads are undetectable. It is also important to protect yourself from different strains of HIV and other STDs, which can worsen your health and make it harder for your body to fight the virus you already have.



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www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/hastpac/hivcare/aids1.aspx