



# New Patient Packet

Center for Prevention and Treatment of Infections  
HIV Care Center  
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## JUST LEARNING YOU ARE HIV-POSITIVE

For More  
Information  
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Finding out that you have HIV is a very scary and life-altering event. You probably have a lot of questions and are not sure where to begin. It is difficult to adjust to the news and hard to comprehend the kind of changes that having HIV will make in your life.

### How do you get HIV?

HIV is found in blood, vaginal fluid, semen, and breast milk. You can become infected with HIV through the following methods:

- having unprotected sex with someone who is infected
- Sharing a needle with someone who is infected
- Being born to someone who is infected or drinking the breast milk of an infected person.

You cannot get HIV from hugging, sharing utensils or cups, touching, breathing the same air, etc.

### I don't look or feel sick

Many people do not know that they are infected with HIV because they do not feel sick. Some people do not get sick for many years. Despite feeling fine, however, the person who is infected can still spread HIV to others. HIV slowly wears down a person's immune system until they are no longer able to ward off infections.

### You are not alone

The most important thing for you to remember is that you are not alone. According to the Florida Department of Health, 1 in 168 Floridians have HIV.

According to the CDC, as of the end of 2005, 1 million persons are estimated to be living with HIV in the United States. HIV is a serious disease that has no cure, but with proper medical care and treatment it can help the disease remain under control. There are programs and professionals who can help you.

There is a lot of good information available to you, but be careful about what information you are getting. Check it out with your doctor or case manager to make sure that it is accurate. On page 6 you can find some resources that may be helpful.

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## What My Doctor May Tell Me

When you visit the doctor he/she may discuss with you what your "counts" are. This includes your CD4 (or T-Cell) count and your Viral Load (see page 2 for more information about these tests). Your doctor will also talk with you about the possibility of beginning treatment or their recommen-

dations about waiting to begin therapy. Your doctor will do a thorough medical history and physical and may make recommendations about lifestyle changes. He/she will also give you basic information about HIV/AIDS or will allow you to speak with a social worker who can provide you with this

information. The first appointment is usually the longest and may feel overwhelming. You may have a lot of questions or you may choose to wait until the next appointment to ask questions. The doctor will likely want to see you every 3 months, or sooner if the need arises.

## Telling Others About My HIV Status

It is difficult to know who to tell about your HIV status or when to tell them. This is a very personal decision that you must make on your own. It is very important that you tell anyone that may have contracted HIV from you. This includes past sexual partners or individuals you have shared needles with. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, the local Health Department can inform these people that they may have been exposed to HIV, without using your name. It is important that you tell anyone in the future that are in a situation for possibly contracting HIV from you, such as partners who you may be

engaging in unprotected sexual activities.

It is your decision about telling your health care provider that you have HIV, but it can be good for them to know so that they can best provide you medical care.

Here are some things to consider before telling others about your HIV status (from New Mexico AIDS InfoNet Fact Sheet #204):

- Know why you want to tell them. What do you want from them?
- Anticipate their reaction. What's the best that could happen? What is the

worst?

- Prepare yourself. Be ready to answer questions they may have about HIV or know where to refer them.
- Get support. Talk it over with someone you trust and come up with a plan
- Accept the reaction. You can't control how others deal with your news.



## My Counts (CD4 and Viral Load Tests)

Every 3 months, your doctor will want to check your CD4 and Viral Load counts (as well as other routine blood work).

Your CD4 cells are the good helper cells in your body that help to fight off infection. When someone who has HIV has a weakened immune system their CD4 count will go down. The lower your CD4 count gets the more likely you are to get sick. A "normal" CD4 count is somewhere between 500 and 1600. If your CD4 count falls below 200, you

are determined to have AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Your goal, and that of your physician, is to keep your CD4 count above 200 so that you are at less risk for getting opportunistic infections (infections that take advantage of weakness in the immune system).

Your Viral Load measures the amount of HIV virus in one milliliter of your blood. With treatment, your doctor would like to see your viral load get to be "undetectable". This does not mean

that you do not have any HIV in your blood—it simply means that you have a viral load of less than 50. Current tests cannot determine your exact viral load below 50. A person may be told that they have a viral load exceeding 750,000—this is because our current tests cannot determine your viral load above that number.

**Remember that you want your CD4 count to be as high as possible and your Viral Load to be as low as possible.**

## Adherence and Resistance

If your doctor recommends that you begin antiretroviral therapy (HIV meds), it is likely that they will talk to you about "adherence". Adherence simply means taking your medications exactly as the doctor prescribes it. The doctors expect you not to miss doses of your medication and to take it the same time every day. If you miss doses of your medication or you take them incorrectly, the HIV virus can multiply

(creating a higher viral load). You also may become resistant to the medications (in other words the medications will no longer work for you even if you later begin to take them as prescribed). This resistance can also develop if you only take PART of your HIV medications. For instance, if you are on 3 different kinds of pills you must take all of them. If you choose to only take 2 of the pills you can still develop a resis-

tance to them. It takes 3 different types of medication to keep the virus under control. There are some meds that have a combination of medications that allow you to take less pills each day, but not everyone is able to take these pills for multiple reasons. Discuss medication options with your doctor to determine which combination is best for you.

## Depression

Depression is a very common condition for people with HIV. Depression is an intense sadness that lasts for weeks or months at a time. Some of the symptoms include persistent feelings of hopelessness, poor concentration, lack of energy, inability to sleep, and loss of appetite. It is important that depression is properly addressed. If depression is not addressed it can cause problems such as inability to take medications properly, participating in high risk activities, or even suicidal thoughts.

Depression may not only can interfere with your health, but also with your quality of life. Individuals who are depressed often have a difficult time interacting with others, do not maintain proper hygiene, lose sexual drive, or even begin using drugs or alcohol to “self-medicate”.

There are many different treatments for depression. Lifestyle changes such as regular exercise, stress or anger management, counseling, and improving sleep habits sometimes make a difference.

There are times, though, that lifestyle changes do not help and the depression only responds to antidepressants.

Depression is nothing to feel ashamed of. The sooner you let your doctor know about your depression, the sooner it can be managed.



## Drug Use and HIV (Taken from AIDS InfoNet Fact sheet #154)

For a lot of people, drugs and sex go together. Drug users might trade sex for drugs or for money to buy drugs. Some people connect having unsafe sex with their drug use.

Drug use, including methamphetamines or alcohol, increases the chance that people will not protect themselves during sexual activity. Someone who is trading sex for drugs might find it difficult to set limits on what they are willing to do. Drug use can reduce a person's commitment to use condoms and

to practice safer sex.

Drug use is also linked with poor adherence, which can lead to treatment failure. It is very important to take every dose of HIV medication. People who are not adherent (miss doses) are more likely to have higher levels of HIV in their blood, and to develop resistance to their medications.

Some street drugs may also interact with medications. When drugs and medications are both “in line” to use the

liver, they might both be processed much more slowly. This can lead to a serious overdose of the medication or the recreational drug.

HIV infection can be spread easily when people share equipment to use drugs (for example needles). Sharing equipment also spreads Hepatitis B and C and other serious diseases. To keep others from becoming infected with HIV it is important to never re-use (or share) any equipment for using drugs.

## Important Legal Documents (adapted from an article by Todd Pilcher, 2003)

All individuals, regardless of their health, should consider obtaining legal documents to insure that their wishes are known in case they become seriously ill. For individuals with a serious medication condition, such as HIV, this becomes even more important. Making plans for the future while you are healthy will help you protect yourself and your loved ones.

**Power of Attorney**—A general power of

attorney allows you to give someone else the right to act on your behalf. A *general* durable power of attorney gives someone the power to sign your checks, use your bank accounts, and handle your money. A durable power of attorney for health care gives someone the power to make decisions about your medical treatment in the event that you are unable to do so.

**Living Will** - this is an instruction

about what life sustaining measures you want if you are unconscious with no hope of recovery.

**Advanced Medical Directive**— this is a combination of a durable power of attorney and a living will in one document.

Once completed, you should keep a copy, give a copy to the person you assigned as power of attorney, and give one to your doctor.

## How to Use a Condom

**MALE CONDOMS** (From The Safer Sex Page on the World Wide Web—1994 John M. Troyer)

1. Use latex condoms.
2. Put the condom on after you get hard. Put a few drops of water-based lubricant inside the tip of the condom.
3. Squeeze the tip of the condom to leave some extra space and roll the rest down the shaft.
4. Put more water-based lubricant on

the outside of the condom.

5. After you come, hold the base of the condom and pull out. Throw the condom away; don't reuse condoms.

**FEMALE CONDOMS** (For more information read the package insert)

1. To insert the female condom find a comfortable position.
2. Be sure that the inner ring is at the bottom, closed-end of the pouch.

3. Hold the pouch with the open end hanging down. While holding the pouch, squeeze the inner ring with your thumb and middle finger.
4. Insert the squeezed female condom. Push the inner ring and the pouch the rest of the way up into the vagina with your index finger, check to make sure the inner ring is up just past the pubic bone. Take your time. Make sure the female condom is inserted straight—not twisted.

## Condom Dos and Don'ts (Adapted from Mexico AIDS InfoNet Fact Sheet #153)

Condoms can protect you during contact between the penis, mouth, vagina, or rectum. Condoms won't protect you from HIV or other infections unless you use them correctly.

Store condoms away from too much heat, cold, or friction. Do not keep them in a wallet or a car glove compartment.

Check the expiration date. Don't use outdated condoms.

Don't open a condom package with your teeth. Be careful that your fingernails or jewelry don't tear the condom. Body jewelry in or around your penis or vagina might also tear a condom.

Use a new condom every time you have sex, or when the penis moves from the rectum to the vagina.

Check the condom during sex, especially if it feels strange, to make sure it is still in place and unbroken.

Do not use a male condom and a female condom at the same time.

Use **water-based** lubricants with latex condoms, **not oil-based**. The oils in Crisco, butter, baby oil, Vaseline or cold cream will make latex fall apart.

Use unlubricated condoms for oral sex (most lubricants taste awful).

Do not throw condoms into a toilet. They can clog plumbing.

## Talking with Your Partner about Being HIV+



It is important to talk with your partner and inform him/her that you are HIV+ and the importance of using condoms. This allows your partner to make an informed decision about participating in sexual activities. These conversations may seem awkward or embarrassing and it may be difficult to determine how to put your thoughts into words.

These feelings are very normal but also make it even more important that you take time to prepare for these conversations so that they are less difficult.

Be prepared for the conversation. Know how to answer his/her questions about the use of condoms and how you will obtain them. Understand your own sexual wants and needs and be willing to express these to your partner and be open to listening to his/her wants and needs. Think carefully about how you will approach your partner

about this issue. It is not appropriate to discuss this matter right before, during, or after sex.

When you do find the right time to talk and are prepared, make sure that you allow time for your partner to process this information. Discuss what sexual wants/needs you have in common and the ones that may be different from each other. Take time apart to think about what each other has said and then be willing to come together to talk again.

## 10 Important things to know about HIV/STDs

1. HIV can only be transmitted through blood, sexual fluids, and breast milk. You cannot get HIV from toilet seats, sharing cups or silverware, sharing clothing, hugging, kissing, etc.
2. Using drugs can increase your chances of transmitting HIV. This does not only include sharing needles. Any mind-altering drugs can cause you to act without thinking increasing risky behavior such as un-safe sex.
3. There is an equal risk of becoming infected with HIV or another sexual transmitted disease regardless of race, income level, age, or gender.
4. A person who is infected with HIV should still use a condom, even with others who are HIV infected. There is a chance of “super-infection”, or being infected with a different strain of HIV. This could mean becoming infected with a virus that is resistant to medications.
5. Sexually transmitted diseases including HIV can be transmitted through oral sex. Be sure to use a condom when participating in oral sex!
6. A person who is HIV positive and has an “undetectable” viral load is still at risk of infecting others. “Undetectable” does not mean that the virus is gone.
7. An HIV positive person can be prosecuted if they do not tell their sexual partner that they have HIV.
8. Sexually Transmitted Diseases may be present without any symptoms. If you think you have been exposed, talk to your doctor.
9. If you are infected with a sexually transmitted disease it can increase the risk of HIV transmission due to a higher chance of blood contact through open sores.
10. If you have participated in any risky behavior including drug use or unprotected sex (oral, anal, or vaginal) please tell your doctor so that they can screen you for sexually transmitted diseases.

## Paying for Medical Care and Medications

If you have lost your insurance, are having difficulty paying for your insurance, or are uninsured please do not give up on your health! There are many options available to you to help with your medical care and medications.

**Medicaid**—Every person who does not currently have insurance should apply for Medicaid. They can do so by going to the local Department of Children and Families (8190 Pensacola Blvd) or can apply online at [www.myflorida.com/accessflorida](http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida).

**Ryan White Program**— This program is intended for HIV + individuals who are without medical insurance. You must have been denied Medicaid in order to qualify. The income limit is up to 300% of the poverty level. If you are found eligible, a referral will be sent to our office. The program will cover your appointments at this office as well as

labs that are ordered by one of our physicians. For more information, you can call Lutheran Services at 479-1757 or the Sacred Heart Ryan White program at 416-6833.

**ADAP**—The AIDS Drug Assistance Program assists individuals with HIV medications. The income limit is up to 300% of the poverty level. If you have further questions about this program, please ask your physician or one of the social workers in our office.

**AICP**—The AIDS Insurance Continuation Program assists individuals who have health insurance with paying monthly insurance premiums. If you are interested in learning more about this services, please speak with an office social worker or with your case manager.

**Medicare D**—If you have Medicare part A or part B, you are eligible to apply

for a Medicare D prescription plan. For more information about this program, please contact 1-800-MEDICARE. Some individuals are eligible for a lower cost for the plan due to low-income. For more information about this extra help contact the social security administration at 1-800-772-1213.

**Patient Assistance Programs**—Certain medications can be received for free or for a reduced price through pharmaceutical companies. If you have no insurance and cannot afford a medication prescribed, please ask to speak with the office social worker to learn more about these programs.



## Resources

### Counseling

Lakeview Center 469-3500  
1221 W. Lakeview Ave

Avalon Center 438-1617  
6024 Spikes Way (Milton)

### Case Management

Sacred Heart 416-6833  
Sacred Heart Professional Bldg Ste 2J  
(Joanne and Olga) - Ryan White

Lutheran Services 497-7157  
14 W. Jordan Street Ste 1H  
(Jennifer, Joel, Terrina) - Ryan White

EASE 429-9618  
3300 N. Pace Blvd Ste 155  
(Carole) - PAC

OASIS (Pensacola) 476-3131 x.223  
5153 N. 9th Ave Ste 305  
(Jennifer and Jim) - PAC

OASIS (Ft. Walton) 314-0950  
745 Beal Parkway (Jean,  
John, Joey) - Ryan White (Jean) -  
PAC

### Medication Assistance

ADAP 595-6767  
Escambia County Health Department 1295  
W. Fairfield Drive (Donna and  
Janice)

### Dental

ECHD Dental Clinic 595-6600 1295 W.  
Fairfield Drive

Midtown Dental 474-0300  
6202 North 9th Ave

Pensacola Junior College 484-2234

### Transportation

Community Transportation 469-8773  
10 E. Texar Drive

ECAT 595-3228  
1515 W. Fairfield Drive

### Legal

Legal Services of NW Fl 432-3999  
701 South J. Street

Legal Services of North Fl 432-8222  
118 S. Baylen Street

Legal Aid 626-2188 6856 Caro-  
line Street (Milton)

### Housing

Area Housing 438-8561  
1920 W. Garden Street

HUD (Section 8 Housing) 626-3100  
180 Governmental Center

HOPWA Program 497-7157  
14 W. Jordan Street Ste 1H  
(Arthur)

### Medicaid/Foodstamps

Department of Children and Families  
494-5800—Escambia County  
626-3100—Santa Rosa County  
833-3758—Okaloosa County

Apply online at  
[www.myflorida.com/accessflorida](http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida)

### Social Security

[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) 1-  
800-772-1213

### Eye Exams

Center for Sight 476-9236  
(takes private insurance or self-pay)

Lion's Club 438-8989  
(assists with uninsured)

Dr. Terrezza 434-2060  
(Medicaid covered eye care, private ins-  
urance, or self-pay)

### Food

Appetite for Life 470-9111  
Home Delivered Meals/Food Pantry  
(Must be referred by case manager) 14  
W. Jordan Street Ste 1A

Manna Food Bank 432-2053  
116 E. Gonzalez Street

### MISC

Positive Healthcare 1-800-832-0778  
(for medipass clients—provides medical man-  
agement)

First Call for Help  
983-7200—Santa Rosa  
595-5905—Escambia 243-  
9111—Okaloosa

## Case Management

HIV is a difficult disease to manage on your own. There are many programs available to help with different problems that you may come across. Each program has different guidelines and eligibility criteria and it is often difficult to know where to begin. This is where case management may help you.

Ryan White case managers are professionals trained in helping individuals

with HIV/AIDS in finding resources to assist them with issues such as obtaining medications or medical care, transportation, counseling, housing, etc. These professionals are aware of the many resources available to you and assist you in maneuvering through them to get you the help that you need. Your case manager can also help educate you about HIV/AIDS and is a good resource

to helping you learn to talk with others about your disease.

If you are interested in learning more about case management or getting set up with a case manager, please contact your doctor's office or review the resource list above.



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(not confidential)

## Center for Prevention and Treatment of Infections

Dr. Wade has been involved in HIV care since the HIV epidemic was first recognized. She has cared for hundreds of patients to date and takes a special interest in remaining aware of all the newest developments and newest medications. Dr. Li-Espino has also been very active in HIV/AIDS care since joining the group in June 2000. The office also employs two Physician's Assistants, Belinda Soltz and Ethan Rhone.

Resources are available for individuals who do not have insurance for physician visits and medication expenses. Federal funds are provided to this area through the Ryan Care Act. Center for Prevention & Treatment of Infections receives these funds to provide care to the uninsured.