

Telephone Support and Community Resources

AIDS Vancouver • Local service organization, offering support services, information and resources 604-893-2201 www.aidsvancouver.com

BC Persons with AIDS Society • A provincial organization offering information, resources and support 604-893-2200 or toll-free 1-800-994-2437. Direct line for peer counselors 604-908-7710 or toll free 1-888-908-7710 www.bcpwa.org

Healing Our Spirit • Support and resources for aboriginal people living with HIV 604-879-8884 or 1-866-745-8884 www.healingourspirit.org

HIV/AIDS Helpline • Phone-line, staffed by trained AIDS Vancouver volunteers 604-696-4666

John Reudy Immunodeficiency Clinic (IDC) • Comprehensive care for HIV positive persons. 604-806-8060 www.cfenet.ubc.ca (under Clinical)

Positive Women's Network • Support and information for women with HIV throughout BC 604-692-3000 or 1-866-692-3001 www.pwn.bc.ca

Safe Injection Sites • Ask the Public Health Nurse if there is a safe place to inject in your community

STI Nurse Info Line • Speak confidentially with a nurse from the Vancouver STI Clinic 604-707-5603 or toll-free 1-888-488-7444

Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users • Information and support for users and former users 604-683-6061 www.vandu.org

YouthCO AIDS Society • Services and information for youth age 15-29 yrs 604-688-1441 or 1-877-youthco (1-877-968-8426) www.youthco.org

Encouraging partners to test for HIV



Step by step



BC Centre for Disease Control
AN AGENCY OF THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY

STI  HIV
Prevention and Control

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An HIV diagnosis can be overwhelming. Take a breath. You are not alone.

Looking after your health and the health of your partners is important. Disclosing to partners can be difficult but support is available. Informing partners in a timely matter can lead to early testing, early diagnosis and treatment which can reduce the spread of HIV.

This brochure suggests a 5 step process to help you plan how you will talk to your partners.



Who is a Partner?

- Persons who you have had sex with
- Persons who you have shared rigs or needles with



Look after your health

You have a life. You have a future.

- Seek supportive people and friends (see back page for resources)
- See a doctor regularly to monitor your HIV
- Eat well
- Enjoy regular exercise
- Support your immune system by not getting overtired
- Protect yourself from other infections
- Limit substances (alcohol and drugs) that can cause you harm by making your immune system work harder
- Seek support if addictions affect your life
- Try to find healthy ways to manage stress
- Keep informed
- Keep connected

Everyone's experience with HIV is different. Help is available, you are not alone.



What if a potential new partner says ...

“No problem, I’m positive too, we don’t need to use condoms” or “No problem, I’m not worried about sharing with you” or “I hate condoms”.

You could say ...

“We still need to use a condom, it’s the way I play”

“We still need to use our own rigs – its safer”

“Its important to me that we use condoms (or our own rigs)”

“I’d be more comfortable with using condoms (or my own rig)”

“Who knows what else is out there, we need to use a condom”

“I always use condoms when I have sex”

“We could each have a different strain (type) of HIV so we need to protect each other”

Or you could choose a less risky option:

“Well if you don’t want to use a condom how about a blow job or a hand job”

What if, before having sex, your partner initiates the conversation with ...

“Hey I just got tested – I’m clean for STIs ... what about you?”

You could say ...

“I’m clean too and I feel healthy, but I have HIV” or “I tested positive for HIV ...”

Step 1

Understand your infection

Understanding your diagnosis will help you realize that HIV is a manageable infection. This knowledge can help you feel more confident when talking to partners.

Online information on HIV

www.thebody.com

www.catie.ca

www.stiresource.com

www.poz.com

Help to find a Doctor

www.cpsbc.ca Select “Find a Physician”.

HIV Care Physician Registry (from BCPWA)
604-646-5353 or 1-800-994-2437 ext. 323.

Help to find a Public Health Nurse

Call 811 (non-emergency health advice)

Ask for the phone number of the Public Health Unit in your area.

www.healthlinkbc.ca Under “Find”, enter the keyword, Health Unit.

www.bccdc.ca From options, select “Clinics and Program”, select “Clinics”.

For more resource information, see back cover.

Step 2

Make a list of all partners that need to know

The goal of informing partners is to reduce the spread of HIV. Letting partners know that they need to get tested can provide you with a sense of relief.

Although everyone responds differently, most partners are grateful for being informed so they can get testing and counselling.

Take some time to make a list of the names of people who you have had sex with or shared needles or rigs with, in the last year.



STI's can spread through the community when partners are not informed of possible infection.

Here are some sentences you could use to start a conversation with a potential new partner before you have sex

"Before this goes any further its important that we are honest with each other. I want you to know that I'm HIV positive ..."

"You are someone I care about and want to get to know more. Before we do anything, I need you to know that I am HIV positive ..."

"If we are going to have sex, we need to use a condom, I am HIV positive ..."

"I want to hook up with you too, I am HIV positive and we need to use condoms ..."

If someone wants to share your drug using equipment, here are some ways to start a conversation

"I have a couple of new rigs – we need to each use our own – I have HIV."

"I have marked my rig by ... because I have HIV. If you use mine you could get infected – I have a clean one for you to use."

"If we're going to shoot up, we need to use our own rigs, I'm HIV positive."

How you can reduce the chances of other persons becoming infected

- Use condoms every time you have sex
- Use your own rigs and needles
- If pregnant, seek advice of a HIV knowledgeable health care provider
- Test regularly for STIs – syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes. Many STIs do not have symptoms but can stress your immune system and make your HIV viral load go up
- If you are on anti-retroviral medications, take as prescribed. If you are having difficulties with the regime, discuss with your doctor
- Consider sharing your feelings and love in a non-sexual way. Express yourself in ways that are safe
- Be confident and assertive about your boundaries and your decisions of safer sex
- Get involved with organizations which support people living with HIV. You will meet people who face the same challenges which you do
- Be careful if you have been recently infected with HIV. During the first few months of infection the HIV viral load can be very high. The risk for transmission to others during this period is significantly higher.



Inform your partners that they need to test

You can ...

- ask a nurse to tell them for you;
- tell your partners with a Health Care Provider present;
- tell your partners yourself;
- or use a combination of these choices.

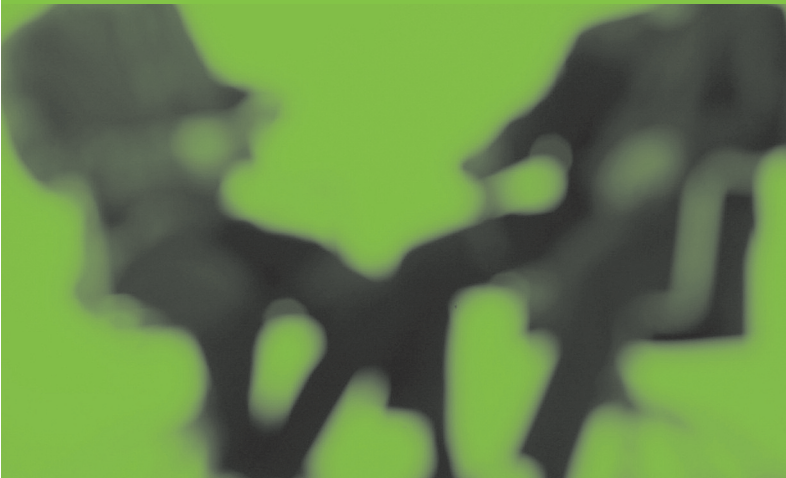
Option 1. Ask a Public Health Nurse to confidentially inform and counsel your partners.

Without giving any information about you, a Public Health Nurse can tell your partners that they may have been exposed to HIV and discuss testing options. You would need to give the nurse the information needed to help them find the person.

See page 3 for finding a Public Health Nurse in your area.

When you ask a nurse to tell your partners for you, you need to bear in mind these ideas:

- Your identity and your diagnosis will be kept secret (confidential). Your partners will not be told that it was you who provided their name.
- Your partners will be given correct information about HIV, and about how and where they can get testing.
- You are choosing a method which may not feel as “personal” but which may provide you with confidentiality about your diagnosis.
- Your partners will not know when the possible exposure might have occurred. If they have already had a recent test, they may worry needlessly.
- The nurse may not be successful in finding the person.



Talk to future partners

Telling future partners about your HIV before you have sex or share drug using equipment, provides them with the opportunity to protect themselves and to protect you.

Some HIV positive persons try to reduce the risk of passing HIV to HIV negative persons by ‘sero-sorting’ (choosing to have unprotected sex with other HIV positive persons). Even if the other person is HIV positive, sexually transmitted infections or drug resistant strains of HIV could be transmitted which could limit treatment options.

In Canada, some people living with HIV have been convicted of serious crimes for not disclosing their HIV status before engaging in activities (vaginal or anal sex, without a condom) that courts consider pose a ‘significant risk’ of transmitting the virus. Whether a person must disclose their status when participating in other activities is still being decided in court cases. Laws change so it is important to keep informed. The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal network (www.aidslaw.ca) is a good source of information about Canadian law and HIV.

It is also important to remember that what the law says, is not necessarily what people do. To protect yourself and others, always practice safer sex and do not share drug injecting equipment regardless of what you know, or think you know, about your HIV status or another person’s HIV status.

Here are some sentences which could help you to start the conversation with your partners

“I had an appointment at the clinic today ... I had an HIV test and it was positive. I have HIV”

“I've been concerned about HIV so I went for a test ...”

“I have something important to tell you ...”

“I wanted to make sure that I was the one to tell you that I tested positive for HIV ...”

“I have to talk to you about something which I find very difficult ... I have HIV and there is a chance you may have been exposed. This does not mean you have it but you need to test.”

Option 2. Tell your partner with a Health Care Provider present

Some people like to tell their partners about their HIV infection with a Health Care Provider present.

When you decide to tell your partners *with* the help of a Health Care Provider ...

- It is a good idea to plan ahead what each of you will say.
- The Health Care Provider will be there to answer questions, offer support, provide a degree of security and refer to other services if needed.
- Your partner will know you have HIV. If safety is an issue Option 1 (see page 5) might be a better choice.
- Your partner may tell others.



Option 3. Tell your partners yourself

If you decide to tell your partners yourself, be aware that Community Agencies and Public Health Nurses can help you prepare.

Plan to tell your partner of your infection and be prepared to give them information about where they can get a test. Choose a place where you will have privacy and a time when you will not feel rushed.

When you decide to tell your partners yourself:

- you can anticipate how much information and support your partners may need;
- your partners will know of your infection, and you lose control over who they tell; and
- you may be placed in an unsafe position if your partners have an unexpected reaction.

Here are some suggestions to help you to get ready to tell your partners yourself

- Practice the words you want to use. Say them out loud in front of a mirror or practice them with a Health Care Provider.
- Have written information ready to give your partner.
- Try to anticipate possible ways your partner may react.
- Stay calm. Deliver this important information about your health with confidence. Your body language and the way you present the information becomes part of the message.
- Plan to call a trusted friend or family member after you have told your partner in case you need to talk to someone or you need a safe place to go.

