

Get the Facts About HIV Medical Care



If you have HIV, one of the most important things you can do is see a doctor who can treat HIV. They'll help you manage your care so you can stay healthy.

How do I find a doctor who treats HIV?

If you already have a primary care doctor (a doctor who manages your regular health care), they may be able to treat HIV. If they don't know a lot about HIV, they can refer you to an HIV specialist.

There are other ways to find an HIV doctor, too. You can:

- Go to locator.hiv.gov and enter your city, state, or ZIP code
- Call your state's HIV/AIDS hotline — you can find the number at hab.hrsa.gov/get-care/state-hiv-aids-hotlines

How do doctors treat HIV?

The doctor in charge of your HIV care will:

- Prescribe your HIV medicines
- Keep track of any new symptoms or health problems you're having
- Connect you to other types of health care providers if needed

Your doctor will also order blood tests to find out your:

- **Viral load**, or how much HIV is in your blood
- **CD4 count**, or how many CD4 cells (special cells that fight infections) are in your blood

These tests help your doctor decide if your treatment plan is working — or if it needs to change.



Your HIV care team

You may have other people on your HIV care team besides your doctor. For example:

- **Nutritionists** can help you make a plan to eat healthy, which helps your immune system stay strong
- **Mental health providers** — like therapists, psychologists, or psychiatrists — can help if you have symptoms of depression or another mental health condition
- **Case managers** can help you get other services and resources you need

Talk with your doctor to figure out what types of care you need.



How often do I need to see my doctor?

Your doctor will probably ask you to come in every 6 months. But you may need to see your doctor more often — especially during the first 2 years after you start treatment or if the amount of HIV in your blood is high.

Seeing your doctor on schedule is one of the most important things you can do to stay healthy. If you skip appointments, your doctor won't know if your medicine is working the way it should or if you're having other health problems.

If you have to miss an appointment for any reason, call your doctor's office to reschedule as soon as you can.



How do I prepare for doctor's appointments?

It's a good idea to get ready for your appointments ahead of time. Before you go:

- Write down any new symptoms or health problems you're having — even if you're not sure they're related to HIV
- Write down any questions you have about HIV or your treatment
- Make a list of any medicines, vitamins, or supplements you're taking besides your HIV medicines — especially any new ones you've started taking

Bring all these things with you and share them with your doctor.

What do I need to do during doctor's appointments?

When you're at a doctor's appointment:

- Ask your doctor to explain things you don't understand
- Ask for copies of new medical records, including lab test results
- Take notes in case you forget anything the doctor told you

And be honest with your doctor. That way, they'll have the information they need to help you stay as healthy as possible.

Ask someone to go with you

Consider bringing a friend or family member with you to doctor's appointments for support. They can take notes and help you remember important information later.



To learn more about HIV, visit:
nmlm.gov/guides/HIV-AIDS-Online-Resources