

Get it straight: HIV and heterosexuals

A fact sheet for HIV-positive heterosexuals and their partners and families

Dealing with diagnosis

Finding out that you have HIV can be a challenging experience. It may be a time of emotional turmoil and questioning, both for you and for those close to you. It is important for you to know that treatment of HIV has advanced a lot over the years and that many people have been HIV-positive for a long time. Information and support can be very important in helping you to deal with the HIV diagnosis and find ways to build a healthy life with HIV. This fact sheet lists a range of useful resources, organisations and services that you can access for confidential advice and support.

Initially, when I first got diagnosed, my first thought was I was going to die sort of fairly soon, maybe within a couple of years or something. My second thought was that I would never be able to have sex again. And my third thought was I will never be able to have children. Nine years later I haven't died. I've had sex. And I have a child. (Ellen, 43)

You are not alone

An HIV diagnosis can make you feel very alone. It might seem as if HIV simply doesn't exist in your community. But you are not alone. About one in five people with HIV in New South Wales identifies as heterosexual.¹ Heterosexuals living with HIV are a very diverse group of people. They include men and women, children and families from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. They are married and single, old and young, wealthy and poor—just about anyone you can think of.²

Living with HIV

When I did get help it turned my life right around. It was the greatest thing that could have happened—to be able to talk to somebody who understood and cared. (Carlos, 37)

HIV changes life. The impact and experience of HIV can be different from one person to the next. But many people who

become HIV-positive go on to live healthy, active and full lives. To adjust to this life change, you may need to know:

- How to find a doctor
- Who to ring to get advice about treatment
- Where to find cultural and language-specific support
- Where to find a counsellor or social worker
- Where to get information about safe sex
- Where to get information about safe injecting drug use
- Where to go for HIV testing (for partners)
- Who to talk to about reproduction and pregnancy
- How to disclose to a new partner that you have HIV
- How to meet others in a similar situation
- Who to ring about legal assistance or housing.

The organisations and services listed on the back of this fact sheet can provide confidential assistance with these issues.

What resources are available?

- *Changing lives*
- *A–Z of sexual matters*
- *PEP brochure*
- *Getting it right*
- *Treat yourself right: information for women with HIV and AIDS*
- *Living a positive life* (in English with instructions on how to access it in other languages)
- Multicultural brochures (available in many languages)

These resources are available from the Heterosexual HIV/AIDS Service (Pozhet) and/or from the Multicultural HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Service (see overleaf for contact details). You can also find most of these resources on www.pozhet.org.au or www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au

References

1 *HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia annual surveillance report 2007*. National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, The University of New South Wales, p. 25: New HIV diagnoses attributed to heterosexual contact accounted for 20% of total HIV diagnoses from 2002–2006. [http://www.nchechr.unsw.edu.au/NCHECRweb.nsf/resources/SurvRep07/\\$file/ASR2007.PDF](http://www.nchechr.unsw.edu.au/NCHECRweb.nsf/resources/SurvRep07/$file/ASR2007.PDF)

NSW HIV/AIDS Strategy: Environmental scan 2006–2007. NSW Department of Health, p. 6: Heterosexuals accounted for 18% of overall notifications but about 40% of late diagnoses. http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2006/pdf/hiv_aids_strat_enviro_scan.pdf

2 If you want to read about other people living with HIV in Australia, you can download the following reports from the internet for free:

Men and women living heterosexually with HIV: The Straightpoz study, Volume 1. <http://nchsr.arts.unsw.edu.au/pdf%20reports/Straightpoz.pdf>

Living with HIV and cultural diversity in Sydney. http://nchsr.arts.unsw.edu.au/pdf%20reports/hiv_cald.pdf

Just gettin' on with my life without thinkin' about it: The experiences of Aboriginal people in Western Australia who are HIV positive. <http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/cproot/376/2/Just%20gettin%20on%20with%20my%20life%202004.pdf>

Services and support for HIV-positive heterosexuals and their partners and families

Finding the nearest doctor

NSW HIV/AIDS information line

To find an HIV doctor, clinic, counsellor or social worker close to where you live:

Ph: (02) 9332 9700 Freecall: 1800 451 600 TTY: (02) 9332 4268

Sexual health clinics

To find your nearest clinic, or see a doctor, nurse or social worker, look under 'S' in the White Pages or go to www.health.nsw.gov.au/PublicHealth/sexualhealth/sexual_plus.asp

Aboriginal community controlled health services

To see a doctor or Aboriginal health workers at your nearest Aboriginal community controlled health service, look under 'A' in the White Pages or go to www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/sexualhealth/community.asp or www.ahmrc.org.au/mapofmemberregions.htm

NSW Sexual Health InfoLine

Experienced sexual health nurses provide anonymous and confidential sexual health and HIV information and referral to the community of NSW. The service also provides clinical support to GP and other health care professionals.

Freecall: 1800 451 624

Finding emotional and practical support

Heterosexual HIV/AIDS Service (Pozhet)

Pozhet is a statewide program supporting men and women living heterosexually with HIV/AIDS and their partners and family members.

Freecall: 1800 812 404 Website: www.pozhet.org.au

Multicultural HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Service

This is a statewide service where bilingual/bicultural co-workers support people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are living with HIV and/or hepatitis C. To contact bilingual/bicultural co-workers:

Freecall: 1800 108 098

Website: www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au

Western Suburbs Haven

For social support, cheap groceries, lunch, workshops, internet access and respite care in Sydney's Greater West, and to find out about events for heterosexuals living with HIV:

Ph: (02) 9672 3600 Email: thehavenoffice@bigpond.com

Positive Life NSW

Provides information, referrals, advocacy and a range of opportunities for HIV-positive people to build friendship networks, meet people and share information and strategies to enhance our health and well-being.

Freecall: 1800 245 677 Website: www.positivelife.org.au

NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUUA)

To access services for past and current injecting drug users:

Freecall: 1800 644 413 Website: www.nuaa.org.au

Aboriginal sexual health workers

Aboriginal sexual health workers are based in both the public and Aboriginal community controlled health sectors within all areas of New South Wales.

Go to <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/sexualhealth/community.asp>

ACON (AIDS Council of NSW)

For counselling, family support, treatments advice, vitamins and referrals, contact your local ACON branch.

Ph: (02) 9206 2000 Freecall: 1800 063 060

Website: www.acon.org.au

PEP Hotline

If you think you've been exposed to HIV, call the 24-hour PEP Hotline as soon as possible. Trained staff provide information, assessment and referral to the nearest service.

1800 PEP NOW or 1800 737 669 (inside NSW)

Finding support for families affected by HIV

KWAIDS (Kids with AIDS)

Camp Goodtime is a national camp for families living with HIV. Contact the Paediatric HIV Social Worker at Sydney Children's Hospital.

Ph: 9382 1851 Freecall: 1800 689 188

Family Planning NSW

To get help with all your sexual and reproductive health needs:

Ph: (02) 8752 4300 Website: www.fpahealth.org.au

FPA Healthline

To have your questions about sexual and reproductive health answered:

Ph: 1300 658 886

Men's Line Australia

Provides help and telephone counselling for men with family and relationship problems.

Ph: 1300 789 978 Website: www.menslineaus.org.au

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