

Winter 2019

My wife never gave up on me: a heterosexual man's story

I am a HIV positive father; my wife is HIV negative and we have given birth to a son and a daughter who are both HIV negative. You have no idea how good it feels to be a father of HIV negative children and have a very supportive wife.

In 2014 my wife became pregnant and I accompanied her to her second antenatal clinic to find out the results of her blood tests. Deep down, I was concerned about my sexual behaviour while traveling overseas. Fortunately, our midwife advised that my wife's HIV test was negative, however, her urine test shown the presence of chlamydia. The midwife kindly suggested that as the father, it would be advisable for me to have a urine test as well. Immediately, I went to see my family doctor who advised me to complete a full Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) test.

I agreed with confidence, since my wife had just tested HIV negative. Unfortunately, my STIs test came back positive for both HIV and chlamydia. We were both in shock, but I was comforted by the fact that my wife was negative. The doctor said that it was important to protect both the mother and the unborn child from acquiring HIV. We were both treated for chlamydia and I immediately started HIV medication and using condoms. My wife understood, and we are still together!

I have been 'undetectable' for a long time, which means the amount of virus remaining in my body is significantly reduced to the point where I can have sex with my wife without condom and not transmit the virus. My wife and I decided to have a second child. She is now three weeks old.

The support and understanding from my HIV negative wife, made such a difference, particularly about stigma. Her forgiveness and kind support helped me to manage my own guilt and shame.

Her unconditional love and understanding helped me to forgive myself for my hidden sexual activities. My wife remains HIV negative, and I am on HIV medication and undetectable.

This story was chosen as an example of how routine antenatal care is essential during pregnancy including: the importance of checking for other STIs. It reminds us that if one partner is HIV negative, it does not necessarily mean the other partner is also negative - both partners need to be tested individually. The good news is that you can still have a HIV negative baby when you are HIV positive. Consistently taking HIV treatment makes you undetectable, therefore very unlikely to pass on HIV.



Do you know?

When a person living with HIV is taking treatment, the amount of HIV in their body (known as their viral load) can be reduced to a level that is 'undetectable'

Being on treatment and having an undetectable viral load means that people living with HIV can live long, healthy lives, have children and not worry about passing on HIV to partners.

It is important to remember to take your daily medication. However not everyone finds it easy, so sharing experiences can be very helpful to others.

Tell us your experiences about how you are going with your treatment.

Free call 1800 812 404

Email: pozhet@pozhet.org.au

HIV and Your Privacy

Do you know that there has been a change to how your HIV information is managed?

Often, there is a need for doctors, nurses and other NSW Health staff to be aware of your HIV status when managing conditions that may not appear to be directly related to HIV. In order to provide a better care, your HIV information is now available to doctors, nurses and other NSW Health staff involved in providing care to you for any condition. Prior to September 2017 this was only available to authorised staff directly involved in your HIV treatment and counselling.

Your HIV information is now available to all clinicians and other NSW Health staff involved in providing all care for you, who access your electronic medical record (called an eMR). Prior to September 2017 this was only available to staff directly involved in your HIV treatment and counselling.

The confidentiality of your HIV information remains unchanged and your privacy is still strictly protected. NSW Health staff members can only view, access or use your health information when it is directly relevant to your treatment and care. Anyone who is not directly involved in your care and inappropriately access your record will face serious disciplinary action and potentially criminal charges.

If you have any questions about this change, do not hesitate to contact Pozhet.

If you have privacy concerns, please contact the Privacy Contact Officer in your area.

For more information visit the NSW Health Privacy Contact Officer list:
<https://bit.ly/2ZpiRrG>

We have also included the NSW Health Privacy leaflet with this newsletter.

How about My Health Record (MHR)?

My Health Record is a national digital (online) record relating to your health and can include information such as prescriptions, doctors' records and other test results. What it means is that instead of having medical records with all your doctors and prescription records at various pharmacies and so on, all the information will be in one central online location managed by you and accessible to authorised health professionals and non-clinical administrators who are looking after your health.

You can control the levels of privacy on your MHR which simply means what goes into your MHR and who can see this information. If you don't want information or records from a particular doctor or hospital visit to be included, you need to tell the doctor, nurse or staff member at the beginning of your appointment. The last day to opt out of having a MHR was 31 January 2019. Records have now been created for eligible Australians who didn't opt out. However, if you have now decided that you don't want a MHR, you can cancel it at any time, and your record will be permanently deleted.

If you are eligible to access Medicare services, you will continue to have access to these services and receive Medicare benefits, whether you have a MHR or not.

For more information or manage your record at:
www.myhealthrecord.gov.au/

Website

Pozhet website is currently being updated. Apart from the latest information and resources for heterosexual people living with HIV, we have added lots of information for everyone, including people in general community who want to know about preventing HIV. There will also be more stories about people living with HIV.

Our new website looks very modern, engaging and looks great whether looking at it on your mobile phone or computer screen. Look out for it as it will be launched soon.



Brochure

Our general service brochure is currently being reviewed and will reflect more thoroughly the services Pozhet provides.

Fact sheets

Working closely with our HIV service partners, Positive Life NSW and Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service, Pozhet is developing a series of fact sheets including shorter and updated versions of the 'Life, Loving and HIV' and 'Having a Baby'.

Women's Needs Assessment

Also with these same partners, a Women's Needs Assessment is in development. The aim of this assessment is to find out social and well-being needs of women living with HIV in NSW. It is a chance for women from different cultural backgrounds to have a say about their support needs. We will let you know when the survey starts.

Facebook

Don't forget to follow us on our Facebook page: Friends and Supporters of Pozhet @Pozhet.

We regularly post information that may interest you.

We also have a secret Facebook group. You are welcome to join to chat with others and share information with your peers. It is only for heterosexual people living with HIV.



Consumer Group

Pozhet Consumer Group (PCG) currently consists of five community members who have lived experience of the issues relating to living with HIV as a heterosexual person. PCG advises Pozhet about issues that arise from time to time which may be of concern to them and their peers. The members meet three times a year at the Marsden Street office. Regional people can join in by phone.

PCG is looking for new members! Are you interested? Contact us and find out more!

Annual Retreat

25 to 27 October 2019

Thanks to our partners at South East Sydney Local Health District, Pozhet is holding its annual retreat on 25 – 27 October at Berry Sport and Recreation Centre. All heterosexual clients, partners and their families are welcome to apply. The retreat is a great opportunity for peer to peer conversations, general support, staying informed about living well with HIV, as well as treatment updates.

Accommodation, food and activities are all included. Applications close 20 September 2019.

Join our mailing and stay updated so you don't miss out!

Email: pozhet@pozhet.org.au

Pozhet at +Connect



Pozhet will be at [+Connect] on Sunday 25 August 12 pm–3.30pm at Rocco's Ristorante, 688 Hume Highway, Liverpool. People living with HIV, their partners and family members are welcome to attend.

Pozhet newly partnered with Positive Life for these events. The one in May was attended by a few Pozhet clients who all reported enjoying the evening and the atmosphere and conversations with others.

Please encourage those who want to attend to RSVP by contacting Positive Life on 02 9206 2177 contact@positivelife.org.au

Monthly Drop in

The first Wednesday of every month heterosexual people living with HIV can visit Pozhet from 2.00pm – 4.00pm to meet their peers, share experiences, find out about events and stay up to date by joining the Pozhet mailing list.

Dates for the rest of 2019

4 September

2 October

6 November

Venue: 18 Marsden Street Camperdown NSW 2050

Farewell to Maxine



After nearly eight years, Maxine Lewis resigned from Pozhet in December 2018 and is now working as a treatment officer at Positive Life NSW.

It's a great opportunity for Maxine but she is missed by both staff and clients at Pozhet.

She has been a passionate staff member with expertise providing much needed reassurance to recently diagnosed heterosexuals and supporting people through challenging disclosure situations.

Maxine took every opportunity to ensure heterosexual men and women were not forgotten. We are sure she will continue to be a strong advocate for heterosexual people living with HIV in her new position.

Maxine is a respected worker in the sector and will be continuing to work with people living with HIV at Positive Life NSW.

Good luck in the future!