

## Hello all!

**A warm welcome to our Autumn Edition newsletter.**

We have achieved some significant milestones in recent months over here at Pozhet, including supporting Positive Life NSW to deliver the +Connect social event and translating our Pozhet factsheets into ten key community languages, in partnership with Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service (MHAHS). We are also in process in finalising our 'Should I Be Worried?' videos. The series aim to challenge some of the discriminatory HIV views possessed by some in the general community. We have adopted a similar approach to the TV series, 'You Can't Ask That!', by posing HIV-related questions to current Pozhet clients. The collective energy and fun our clients bring to the interviews, makes for very engaging viewing, whilst simultaneously addressing some very common misconceptions regarding HIV. We would like to extend our warmest thanks to those who participated –

much appreciated! We will be launching both the factsheets and video for HIV Testing Week 2023 (1 – 7 June 2023).

In case you haven't heard the great news yet – there have also been some recent changes to compassionate access to treatment for those who are Medicare Ineligible. This is a significant step forward in ensuring equitable access for all, regardless of Medicare status in NSW. More information can be found on page 2.

We are also very excited to report that we are embarking on 30 years of service, over this time, we have seen significant gains in the health & wellbeing of people living with HIV, we would like to thank you for being part of this!

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out at: [pozhet@pozhet.org.au](mailto:pozhet@pozhet.org.au)

## Celebrating 30 Years

### How we began

**In 1993, a counsellor at the Albion Centre, Patricia Austin, contacted the NSW Department of Health as she recognised that there was little specific support for heterosexuals living with HIV.**

They suggested starting with a dedicated phone line. Albion Centre agreed to host the phone line under the supervision of Patricia, which commenced in 1993. Funding was then sustained by the NSW Department of Health to provide heterosexuals living with HIV/AIDS with a phone line and support groups.

Soon after, Central Sydney Area Health Service (now Sydney Local Health District) agreed to auspice the funding for Pozhet as a NSW-wide service. Pozhet remains under the umbrella of Sydney Local Health District today.

Pozhet organised a calendar of events for people living with HIV who identify as heterosexual, including retreats, workshops, a men's shed, and an African Women's group.

In 2023, the nature of HIV has changed. Pozhet is now providing prevention campaigns targeting heterosexuals at risk of HIV.



**Sneak peek:** Picture from our upcoming video campaign

# FREE access to HIV medications for everyone



NSW Health announced on the 18th of April that people living with HIV who are not eligible for Medicare will be able to access FREE HIV Treatment (ART) through Public Hospital Pharmacies.

This access is now available and has completely replaced current compassionate access agreements directly with pharmaceutical companies from the 28th of April 2023. Funding for this has come from the Federal Government through a commitment of \$12.5 million per year to all states and territories in Australia until 2026. NSW Health anticipates this funding agreement will continue beyond 2026.

## Next steps

1. Continue taking your medication as per usual
2. Contact your prescribing doctor prior to finishing your current supply and ask about the new arrangements

**These changes should not cause a delay or gap in taking your HIV medication**

## Improving Access to Cervical Screening



### Self-collection for the Cervical Screening Test

From the 1 July 2022, women and people with a cervix aged 25 – 74 will have two options when they book in for a Cervical Screening Test which looks for Human Papillomavirus (HPV). One option is for your healthcare worker to collect your sample from the cervix using a speculum. The second, and newest option, is a self-collected sample meaning that you can collect your own vaginal sample using a simple swab.

Self-collection is just as effective and must be ordered and overseen by a nurse or doctor. Self-collection should improve access for many groups who currently don't feel comfortable with the current process. This could include survivors of sexual abuse, transmen with cervixes and other people who have been under screened due to cultural and/or religious reasons.

### More about Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

In December 2017 cervical screening (which looks for HPV) replaced the Pap smear (which identified cell changes) as the screening method to prevent cervical cancer in Australia. HPV is a common virus passed

through sexual or skin to skin contact. Even if you have been vaccinated for HPV you still need to be screened as the vaccination only works for some strains of HPV. If HPV is detected, depending on the type of HPV, you will either need to return to have a sample of cells taken from your cervix by your doctor or nurse or you will be referred to a specialist for further tests or treatment.

### Who is Eligible?

You are eligible for a Cervical Screening Test every 5 years if:

- You have ever been sexually active
- Aged between 25 years and 74 years
- Are a woman/ person with a cervix

Women with HIV have a higher risk of developing cervical cancer and are required to have this Cervical Screening Test (Pap smear replacement) every 3 years. Women with a new diagnosis of HIV should have a review of their cervical screening history to ensure they are up to date with screening in line with the 3-yearly interval for this group. [bit.ly/3Ng9KFn](https://bit.ly/3Ng9KFn).



## Access to bulk billing GPs in decline

**Is your doctor no longer bulk billing or you cannot find one? This is becoming a more common experience across the country. GPs report that the reason behind these fee increases or gap costs is that the amount paid by the government for consultations and other services is not covering the costs of providing these services.**

These experiences have been especially felt in regional and outer suburban areas where a larger medical centre often referred to as a “super clinic” isn’t viable to offset prices.

However, heading to the GP is a vital part of maintaining good health especially when living with HIV. Within the context of rising costs of living we have put together a breakdown of the recent budget announcements and a few practical measures before they come in to affect or if you are not an eligible patient.

### Changes to Medicare Bulk Billing

On November 1st, Medicare rebates will be increased for eligible patients under 16 and Commonwealth concession card holders. These increases will amount to a tripling of consult incentive paid by the federal government directly to GP’s. This amount varies depending on location within metropolitan areas the rebate will increase from \$6.85 to \$20.65 and in remote areas from \$13.15 to \$39.65.

Although these increases have been positively received by both GP’s and the Royal Australian College of GP’s it is still yet to be fully understood how this will impact bulk billing more broadly and if this will functionally change co-payments or bulk billing arrangements in clinics across the country.

### Practical tips to access Bulk Billing

#### Ask if the GP if they can waive the fee

All of the co-payments are discretionary for the GP and depending on your circumstances the GP may decide to waive this payment on the spot. These circumstances could include that you need to see the GP more often due to your HIV or additional comorbidities, you’re a concession card holder, or in financial hardship. It is worth discussing with your doctor that you are considering changing doctors because of the fees. This conversation is especially important because the GP can’t waive the fee if you don’t talk to them about it.

#### Consult your specialist team

If you have a specialist team supporting you with your HIV care they will be able to assist you with this in multiple ways. Through waving their fees (if they have any) to assessing your eligibility for concession cards or funding schemes specifically for people living with HIV. Specialist teams and social workers are there to help you and will have the most up-to-date information. This may even include referrals to telehealth services or accessing services provided by NGOs such as ACON.

#### Consider looking around your area for a bulk billing doctor

Although this may not be the most desired option if you have been seeing your doctor for many years or are hesitant to disclose medical history with a new GP this may be the quickest and easiest option. This can be done with a quick and simple search online for bulk billing doctors in your area. This search will identify medical centres and/or doctors near you that bulk bill. This should identify most of the doctors in your area that bulk bill as most medical centres have this easily accessible on their web page.

# San Choy Bau

www.healthyliving.nsw.gov.au

Time 45 mins Serves: 4 Rating: Medium

## Ingredients:

- Canola or olive oil cooking spray
- 500g lean pork mince
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 200g green beans, thinly sliced
- 1 large carrot, grated
- 4 green shallots, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons salt-reduced barbecue sauce
- 1 tablespoon salt-reduced soy sauce
- 1/3 cup coriander leaves
- 8 large butter lettuce leaves
- 1 cup bean sprouts, ends trimmed

## Method

1. Heat a wok or large non-stick frying pan and grease with cooking spray.
2. Add mince, garlic and ginger and cook for 5-10 minutes over a high heat until mince is evenly browned, breaking up any large pieces with a wooden spoon.
3. Add beans, carrot and shallots and stir over heat a further 1-2 minutes.
4. Stir in sauces and coriander leaves. Remove from heat.
5. Spoon mince mixture onto lettuce leaves and top with bean sprouts.
6. To eat, wrap up leaves to enclose filling.

**Tip:** We used butter lettuce leaves but you could use iceberg or baby cos lettuce if preferred.

## Quiz

1. In what month does Men's Health Week take place?
2. *TRUE or FALSE:* HIV can be transmitted by kissing?
3. Who is next in line for the British throne?
4. *TRUE or FALSE:* Non-Medicare eligible people living with HIV can access free HIV medication
5. PrEP is a medication that reduces the risk of infection of HIV *before or after* possible HIV exposure?
6. In what state can you find The Big Pineapple?
7. How often should people living with hepatitis B have a check-up?  
Every month / Every six months / Every year / Every two years
8. *TRUE or FALSE:* Cervical screening can be conducted using a self-collected swab.
9. What anniversary is Pozhet celebrating this year
10. What international soccer tournament is taking place across Australia and New Zealand this year?

## Read & Watch recommendations



- Our Missing Hearts by Celeste Ng
- Liberation Day by George Saunders
- Sister Girl by Jackie Huggins



- The Diplomat – Netflix
- Elvis – Netflix  
(finally on a streaming platform in Australia)
- Alone Australia (SBS on demand)
- Matildas world at our feet (Disney plus)

If you have any recommendations for movies, must-read books or binge-worthy TV series, email them to us for the next newsletter at [pozhet@pozhet.org.au](mailto:pozhet@pozhet.org.au)

## Answers to Quiz

1. June
2. False
3. Prince William
4. True
5. Before exposure
6. Queensland
7. Every six months
8. True (see pg 2 for more info)
9. 30 Years
10. FIFA Women's World Cup



Level 1, 300 Bridge Road  
Forest Lodge NSW 2037



Email us:  
[pozhet@pozhet.org.au](mailto:pozhet@pozhet.org.au)



Facebook  
[@Pozhet](https://www.facebook.com/Pozhet)



(02) 9515 1298