

# Supporting Clients That Test HIV-Positive



**People with HIV are living long and healthy lives • There are people and programs to help you • You can protect your partners**

This document offers tips for delivering test results and supporting clients who test positive for HIV. Please adapt these talking points based on the client's needs and your organization's process for connecting clients to services. Remember to use plain language that the client can understand.

## Part 1: The basics

### 1. Your test result is:

- Positive, which means you have HIV, or
- Reactive, which means it's likely you have HIV.

You will need a second test to confirm the result. *(Share the test result right away. Avoid small talk before giving the result. Small talk can increase anxiety for both the client and provider. Once you have given the result, pause and wait for a cue from the client to continue.)*

2. With medications and health care, **people with HIV can live long and healthy lives**. Taking medication is very important for people with HIV, even if you do not feel sick. The virus attacks the body's immune system and the body is not able to fight HIV on its own. However, HIV medications are very effective when you take them the way your health care provider tells you.
3. **There are people and programs to help** you get the care and support you need, both emotionally and financially. It's normal to feel a range of emotions after testing positive for HIV.
4. **What questions do you have?**
5. **Do you have health insurance?** *(If not, connect the client with a case manager or someone who can help with insurance coverage.)*
6. I want you to know that **you can protect your sexual partners or needle-sharing partners from getting HIV**. People with HIV who take HIV medicine as prescribed and get and keep an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to their HIV-negative sexual partners. An undetectable viral load means the HIV medicine has reduced the amount of the virus in your body enough that standard tests can't detect it. Learn more about Undetectable = Untransmittable at [www.preventionaccess.org](http://www.preventionaccess.org).

Remember, HIV can be spread through blood, semen (including pre-ejaculatory fluid), vaginal secretions, rectal fluids and breast milk. It's important to test for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well (such as syphilis and gonorrhea). If you or a partner of yours

has another STI, the risk of HIV transmission goes up. Some STIs can cause sores in the genital area that create an entry or exit point for HIV. Even without a sore, STIs can cause inflammation, which also increases the risk of HIV transmission.

## 7. What are you planning to do when you leave here today?

Do you have someone you can talk to?

Are you thinking about doing anything to harm yourself?

- Mental health crisis lines are available across Oregon. Call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** (English) or **1-888-628-9454** (Spanish).
- Find crisis services by county at <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/safeliving/suicideprevention/pages/crisislines.aspx>.
- You can also find services through 211info. Dial 2-1-1 or visit [www.211info.org](http://www.211info.org).

## 8. May I call you to check in tomorrow?

## 9. Here are some helpful resources. We can talk about these when I call tomorrow. You are welcome to contact me as well.

- **Appointment information.** *(If an appointment was made with a health care or service provider, give the client a card with the following information:*
  - » *Organization name*
  - » *Doctor's name*
  - » *Phone number*
  - » *Address, and*
  - » *Date and time of the appointment.)*
- **HIV case management.** HIV case managers help clients get health care and learn to manage HIV and other chronic diseases. Some people are also eligible for other services, such as housing, food and nutritional support. To find a case manager by county, visit <http://bit.ly/findCM>.
- **CAREAssist.** CAREAssist (Oregon's AIDS Drug Assistance Program) helps people living in Oregon get HIV medications and medical care. CAREAssist can help if you are:
  - » Living with HIV, and
  - » At 550 percent of the federal poverty level or below (see what monthly income this is at <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASES/CONDITIONS/HIVSTDVIRALHEPATITIS/HIVCARETREATMENT/CAREASSIST/Pages/FAQs.aspx>).

You can be eligible for CAREAssist even if you are an Oregon Health Plan member.

CAREAssist can help pay for many types of health insurance, prescription medications, copays, gaps in coverage and more. Learn more at [www.healthoregon.org/careassist](http://www.healthoregon.org/careassist). A case manager can help a client access CAREAssist services.

- **Information for people newly diagnosed with HIV.**
  - » A printable brochure with information about HIV care and treatment in Oregon is available at <http://bit.ly/HIVcareOR>.
  - » Community based organizations in Oregon include:
    - ◆ [HIV Alliance](#)
    - ◆ [Cascade AIDS Project \(CAP\)](#), and
    - ◆ [Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living \(EOCIL\)](#).
  - » Learn more about Oregon’s initiative to end new HIV infections in our state at <https://www.endhivoregon.org>.
  - » Other resources include <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/livingwithhiv/index.html> and [www.hiv.gov](http://www.hiv.gov).
- Free condoms and lubricant are available through [One at Home](#).

## Part 2: Additional information

*(Testing positive for HIV often leaves a person overwhelmed with questions and concerns. It is important to remind clients that HIV can be treated effectively with HIV medicines. HIV medicines help people with HIV live longer, healthier lives and reduce the risk of HIV transmission. You can discuss the information below during a follow-up conversation, if necessary.)*

**10. The first step after testing positive for HIV is to see a provider of HIV health care services,\*** even if you do not feel sick. Getting medical care and treatment with HIV medicines as soon as possible is the best way to stay healthy. After testing positive for HIV, a person’s first visit with a health care provider includes:

- A review of the person’s health and medical history,
- A physical exam, and

**11. Several lab tests.**

**12. Let’s talk about your first appointment** with an HIV care provider. I am happy to help with:†

- Scheduling your first appointment while you are here

- Sending a reminder the day before your appointment
- Helping with transportation to your appointment (for example, vouchers or rides), and
- Checking in with you after your appointment.

**13. It is important that your partners get tested for HIV.** Right now, you have an opportunity to help keep people you know healthy. Since HIV is transmitted through sex or sharing needles, your partners should be told that they may have been exposed so they can get tested for HIV. You can tell them yourself or staff from the local health department can do this for you without ever sharing your name.

- Has someone from the health department contacted you to talk about these options yet?‡ Please be aware that someone will contact you if they haven't already.
- *(If not)* Can you tell me your partners' names and how to contact them? The health department will talk to you about this in more detail.
- [Telling Others](#) is a webpage with information on how to share an HIV diagnosis with others. It is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Oregon residents can order a free at-home HIV test through [Take Me Home](#).

---

\* Both confirmed and reactive test results call for linking the client to care. If a client's test result is reactive, the receiving medical clinic must be told about the result and the need for a second test.

† Only agree to help with tasks that you are able to complete. In some agencies, these tasks are assigned to staff other than the person delivering the test result.

‡ Oregon Administrative Rules require laboratories and physicians to report HIV cases to Local Public Health Authorities (LPHAs). LPHAs must then report HIV cases to the OHA Public Health Division. These reports allow public health staff to identify and contact persons diagnosed with HIV and in need of services. For more information about HIV case reporting requirements, please visit <http://bit.ly/OR-IG>.



PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION

This document can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request this publication in another format or language, contact the Public Health Division at 971-673-1222, 971-673-0372 for TTY.