

## DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Managing HIV

It can feel overwhelming to be diagnosed with HIV, but by better understanding your condition you can start to take control of managing it. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

## Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, the advanced stage of HIV infection in which the immune system is severely weakened (compromised) and vulnerable to potentially serious opportunistic infections.
<b>CD4 Count</b>	A blood test that measures the strength of your immune system based on the number of immune cells (called CD4 T cells) in a sample of blood.
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that can cause AIDS by slowly targeting and destroying immune cells (most specifically CD4 T cells).
<b>HIVS Status</b>	The designation of your current state of infection, either HIV-positive (confirmed infection) or HIV-negative (non-infected).
<b>Antiretroviral drugs (ARVs)</b>	Medications used to treat HIV which prevent the virus from making copies of itself (replicating).
<b>Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)</b>	The daily use of ARVs to prevent infection in an HIV-negative individual.
<b>Adherence</b>	Taking your HIV drugs every day at the same time as prescribed.
<b>Drug Resistance</b>	When the virus mutates and becomes insensitive (resistant) to your ARVs, usually as a result of poor adherence.
<b>Opportunistic Infections (OIs)</b>	Infections normally controlled by the immune system that can develop if your immune system is compromised.
<b>Viral Load</b>	A blood test which measures how many viruses are in a sample of blood
<b>Undetectable</b>	The term used to describe when the number of viruses in your blood is so low that they cannot be detected by viral load tests.



### Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your HIV.

#### About the Medical Practice

- How much experience do you have treating HIV? What is your medical background?
- Who do I call in case of an emergency?

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#### About Diagnosis

- What do my lab tests mean?
- What do the tests say about the health of my immune system?
- What infections am I at risk of? What symptoms should I be watching out for?
- What can I do to prevent any opportunistic infections?

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#### About Transmission & Prevention

- How is HIV transmitted? How do I prevent passing the virus to others?
- Is PrEP a reasonable option for my partner?
- What should I do if my partner is accidentally exposed?
- What happens if I get re-infected?
- What if I want to have a baby?

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#### About Treatment

- Why do I need to start treatment now? What will happen if I don't start treatment?
- How do you decide which drugs I should take?
- How and when do I take the drugs?
- Are there any food requirements (including the types or amounts of food I should eat)?
- What are the common side effects? Is there anything I can do to prevent side effects, and should I do if I develop a serious one?
- Will the drugs interact with other medications I am taking?
- Do you have any tips on how to maintain adherence?
- What should I do if I miss a dose? What happens if I stop treatment entirely?

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