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KNOWING YOUR OPTIONS:

Setting Yourself Up for a Healthy Future!

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Finding out that you are living with HIV can be confusing and difficult. Fortunately, there are many services available to youth. Here is some help to figure out where to start.

"I never thought that by having the virus my life would change so much.

I've learned to see and live life so differently.

I have learned to take care of myself and not to judge others."

- 23-years-old, tested HIV+ at 19

What is HIV?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. It is a virus that weakens the body's immune system and can cause acquired immune deficiency syndrome, known as AIDS.

How is HIV spread?

HIV lives in semen, pre-cum, vaginal fluids, blood, and breast milk of a person with HIV. It is most commonly spread through unprotected sex or sharing needles with an HIV-positive person. HIV can also be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

"I got informed and got the help I need. Now I'm healthy and doing positive things for myself and taking care of my health."

- 22-years-old, tested HIV+ at 15



Can I still have sex?


People with HIV can still have great sex. There are things you can do to make sex less risky but still have fun. Correct condom use is important for protecting your partner(s) and yourself. If you have any questions about safer sex, ask your provider.

Can HIV be treated?

There is no way to get the virus out of your body, but there are many medications that you can take to keep the virus in check.

Why should I go to the doctor if I feel fine?

Some people with HIV have symptoms, and some do not. Either way, starting HIV treatment early can help you to be your healthiest. Even if you feel fine, it is still important to see your doctor regularly.





Do I need my parent or legal guardian's permission?



Your medical information is confidential, or private, unless you give permission to share it. In California, if you are at least 12-years-old, you may consent to the testing, diagnosis, and treatment of HIV/AIDS.



(Cal. Health and Safety Code 121020 & Cal. Family Code 6926)

Will the doctor tell my parents or legal guardian?

Your doctor is not allowed to share information about HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases testing, diagnosis, or treatment with your parents or legal guardian without written permission from you.

(Cal. Health & Safety Code 123110(a), 123115(a)(1); Cal. Civ. Code 56.10, 56.11)






How am I going to be able to afford HIV services?

Everyone is eligible for some kind of program to pay for HIV care. Your age and income will affect which program(s) will cover you. The agencies you've been referred to will help you sign up.


What if I am undocumented?

If you are not a citizen or legal resident of the United States, you may be covered under the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and CCS, but you cannot get Medi-Cal.



"I know it's cliché, but you still keep your goals and follow your dreams."

- 21-years-old, unknown age of diagnosis





HIV care programs:

Medi-Cal (called Medicaid in other states)

This is a public program for low-income people that provides health care services, including HIV/AIDS care.

Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program


This federal act provides for the health needs of HIV positive people who are low-income and underinsured or uninsured.



California Children's Services (CCS)

This state program covers children and youth up to age 21 who are low-income. If you do not tell your parents that you have HIV and can't ask them for proof of your family's income, you may apply for "Protective Service Medi-Cal" and a waiver.

Private Insurance

If you have private insurance, talk to your doctor about your HIV diagnosis and what services are available.





Need support or referrals?
The California Youth Crisis Line is a free, confidential,
24-hour hotline.
1-800-843-5200



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