

Supporting clients that test HIV-positive

This document offers tips for delivering test results and supporting clients that test positive for HIV. Please adapt the following talking points as needed 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 indicates it's likely you have HIV. A second test is needed to confirm the result.

Share the test result immediately. Avoid small talk before giving the result; it can increase anxiety for both the client and provider. Pause and wait for a cue from the client to continue.

2) With medications and health care, most **people with HIV can live long and healthy lives.**

Taking medication is very important for people with HIV because the virus attacks the body's immune system, even if you do not feel sick. 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 experience 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 assist with insurance coverage.

6) I want you to know that **you can protect your sexual partners or needle-sharing partners from contracting HIV.** Taking HIV medication will decrease the amount of virus in your body. By taking medication as prescribed and using condoms consistently, you can reduce the risk of transmission to partners by more than 99 percent.¹

Remember, HIV can be spread through blood, semen (including pre-ejaculatory fluid), vaginal secretions and breast milk. It's important to test for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well. 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.

Three key messages:

- Many people with HIV are living long and healthy lives.
- There are people and programs to help you.
- You can protect your partners.

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?

- Assess the client's emotional state and share information about available counselors and hotlines.
 - » Oregon HIV/STD Hotline: 1-800-777-2437 (English), 1-800-499-6940 (Spanish) or www.oregonaidshotline.com
 - » 211info: 2-1-1 or www.211info.org

8) **May I call you to check in tomorrow?**

9) **Here are some helpful resources,** which we can talk about 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 organization name, doctor name, phone number, address, and date and time of the appointment.

¹ Patel P, et al. Estimating per-act HIV transmission risk: a systematic review. AIDS. 2014 Jun 19; 28(10):1509–1519.

- **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.** In Oregon, CAREAssist (Oregon's AIDS Drug Assistance Program) helps people get HIV medications and medical care. Anyone living with HIV that is at 400 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately \$3,890 per month for one person) or below is eligible for CAREAssist, even if that person is 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. 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>.
 - » A series of "HIV Health & Wellness" booklets are available online and can be ordered for free at www.projectinform.org/hivhealth/.
 - » Other resources include www.AIDS.gov and www.thebody.com.

For local use:

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Part 2: Additional information

Some people feel overwhelmed after getting an HIV-positive test result. The information below may be discussed during a follow-up conversation, if necessary.

- 10) Knowing you are HIV-positive is the first step to managing the infection. You've already completed the first step by getting tested. **Your next step is to see a provider of HIV care services.****²
The provider will do more testing to see how the virus is affecting your body and talk with you about treatment choices. It is important that you see an HIV care provider soon.
- 11) Let's talk about your first appointment with an HIV care provider. I am happy to help. I can:**³
 - Schedule your first appointment while you are here.
 - Remind you of it the day before your appointment.
 - Assist with transportation to your appointment (e.g., vouchers, rides).
 - Check in with you after your appointment.
- 12) 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 notified 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 discuss these options yet?⁴
 - (If not) Can you tell me your partners' names and how they can be contacted? The health department will discuss this in more detail with you.

² Both confirmed and reactive test results warrant linkage to care. If a client has a reactive test result, the receiving medical clinic should be informed of the individual's test result and need for confirmatory testing.

³ Only agree to help with tasks that you are able to complete. In some organizations, these tasks are assigned to staff other than the person delivering the test result.

⁴ Oregon Administrative Rules require laboratories and physicians to report HIV cases to Local Public Health Authorities (LPHAs) and LPHAs to 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>.