



Looking after yourself

Women and HIV: A series of factsheets for women about HIV



Testing for HIV



Recently Diagnosed



Treatments: The basics



Pregnancy and me



NSW Services & Websites

Life is a balancing act

For many women this often includes family and work responsibilities. Having HIV means that you will need to pay more attention to your health.

Finding a balance can be a challenge but your doctor, counsellor or a support worker can help you. In the meantime, here are some important things to think about.

Nutrition and physical activity

A good diet improves general wellbeing and reduces the risk of other diseases. A balanced diet should include all of the following food groups:

- Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese
- Lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans and nuts.

For more information about your diet, talk to a nutritionist at one of the HIV services.

Regular exercise can reduce stress levels, improve sleep and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Talk to your doctor about what type of exercise is best for you and try to find an activity you enjoy, which fits into your daily life.

Smoking

Smoking can increase your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and cancer. HIV positive people who smoke can be more likely to get certain infections and serious illnesses, particularly those affecting the chest. If you smoke, it is very important to think about quitting.

The Quitline and your doctor can help and support you with this.

Pap tests

Regular Pap tests can help to prevent cervical cancer. A Pap test shows any abnormal cells that may cause problems. These cells can be monitored or treated to prevent cervical cancer. Because abnormal cells are more common in women who are HIV positive, you should have a Pap test every year.

Intimacy and sex

Intimacy and sex may change as you adjust to living with HIV. Give yourself time. Wanting to be close to someone is natural and you have the right to fully enjoy your sexual life.

If you are worried about passing on HIV to your partner, talk to a support worker.

They can answer those difficult questions and support you along the way.

What can we do if the condom breaks or we forget to use one?

PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) is a treatment that may prevent HIV transmission. Your sexual partner will need to be assessed and may be given PEP. This **must** happen within 72 hours of having unsafe sex, but the sooner the better. Call the 24 hour PEP Hotline to find out where to be assessed for PEP.

Sexual health

People living with HIV are more vulnerable to Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs). Condoms and lubricant work very well to prevent the transmission of HIV but they do not always work as well to prevent other STIs. Many STIs do not have any symptoms. If you are sexually active, have regular STI checks.

Negotiating safe sex

Negotiating safe sex with a partner is not always easy. Try to talk about it before you get in the mood for sex. Be clear about what is OK for you and what is not. Always carry condoms and lubricant with you.

Communication is important, but not all couples are the same. If you are worried about your partner's reaction or you find it difficult to talk about this with him or her, you can discuss this with a support worker.

HIV and ageing

There is increasing information about the impact of HIV on ageing and vice versa. The regular advice given to all women about ageing and menopause is a good guide, though it is also important to talk to your doctor about your specific needs.

Services

Also see NSW Services and Websites factsheet

Quitline Ph:131 848

PEP Hotline (24hrs)
Freecall 1800 737 669

Family Planning NSW
Healthline Ph: 1300 658 886

If you need an interpreter call: 131 450

Further reading: follow the links or ask a support worker for a copy of these resources

Treat yourself right

http://www.afao.org.au/library_docs/resources/TYR_07.pdf

Changing Lives

http://www.pozhet.org.au/resources/Changing_Lives.pdf

Sex Matters A-Z

<http://www.pozhet.org.au/resources/SexMattersA-Z.pdf>

Women's health information

www.jeanhailes.org.au/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/

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