



# How to Stay Healthy with HIV

There's no cure for HIV, but there are medicines to help you manage it. And there are many other things you can do to help you lead a long, healthy life.

## Get medical care and treatment

Getting regular medical care and taking your HIV medicine are the best things you can do to stay healthy. Specifically, it's important to:

- **See a doctor or nurse who treats HIV.** Your doctor will probably ask you to come in a couple of times a year. If you have to cancel an appointment, reschedule as soon as you can.
- **Stick to your treatment plan**, which means taking your HIV medicine exactly the way your doctor tells you to. If you do, you can keep the amount of HIV in your body so low that there's almost no chance you can pass HIV to other people.
- **Keep track of any new symptoms or health problems** you're having — and tell your doctor about them. Your doctor may recommend changes to your treatment plan or refer you to other doctors who can treat your new health problems.

## Build healthy routines

Taking these steps can also help you stay healthy:

- **Get plenty of physical activity.** Regular physical activity lowers your risk of developing health problems that are more common in people with HIV.
- **Eat healthy.** This helps your immune system stay strong so your body can fight infections. It also helps you manage HIV symptoms.



- **Don't smoke.** Smoking can cause many serious health problems, and your HIV medicine may not work as well if you smoke. If you need help quitting, visit [BeTobaccoFree.gov](https://www.betobaccofree.gov) or call **877-44U-QUIT** (877-448-7848).
- **Avoid heavy drinking or taking illegal drugs.** Drinking too much alcohol or taking drugs can damage your liver, which means your HIV medicine may not work as well. It can also make it harder for your body to fight infections. If you think you have a drug or alcohol use problem and you need help, call **800-662-HELP** (800-662-4357).

## Prevent opportunistic infections

If you have HIV, it's important to protect yourself from **opportunistic infections**. These are infections that people with HIV get more often than other people. Opportunistic infections are also more serious in people with HIV than in people who don't have HIV.

Some common opportunistic infections include:

- Herpes, which can cause sores on or around the mouth, vagina, or penis
- Pneumonia, a lung infection that can cause coughing and trouble breathing
- Thrush, a yeast infection that can cause white patches, redness, and pain inside the mouth

When people with HIV get certain opportunistic infections, it means they have moved to the final stage of HIV, which is called AIDS.

### **Sticking with your treatment plan is the best way to prevent opportunistic infections.**

It's also important to:

- Get all the vaccines that your doctor recommends on schedule
- Ask your doctor if you need to take any medicines to prevent opportunistic infections
- Avoid drinking untreated water, like water directly from a lake or river
- Take steps to avoid food poisoning — for example, don't eat undercooked eggs, unpasteurized fruit juice, or raw seed sprouts



## Stay healthy when you travel to other countries

Your risk of getting an opportunistic infection is higher in some countries, so take steps to protect yourself when you travel.

### Before you travel:

- Talk to your doctor about your trip at least 4 to 6 weeks before you leave — they may recommend certain medicines or vaccines
- Find out the names of HIV doctors or clinics in the place you plan to visit
- Figure out what services your health insurance covers when you travel, and consider buying extra travel insurance
- Pack a copy of your insurance policy, and give a copy to a friend or family member

### While you're away:

- Avoid drinking tap water (including drinks and ice made from tap water) unless it's been boiled
- If you need to go to a hospital or health clinic, avoid places that treat TB (tuberculosis) patients
- If you touch an animal, wash your hands with soap and water afterward, and be sure to avoid animal poop — for example, by wearing shoes on a beach

To learn more about HIV, visit:  
[nmlm.gov/guides/HIV-AIDS-Online-Resources](https://nmlm.gov/guides/HIV-AIDS-Online-Resources)