



Conversation Builds Health Care Relationships

Communicating with your providers is vital.

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Both long-term survivors and those newly diagnosed with HIV have plenty of treatment options to choose from to keep the virus suppressed. In addition to keeping you healthy, having an undetectable viral load prevents you from transmitting the virus via sex. Also, for most folks, current HIV medications cause virtually no side effects. Medications now range from once-daily all-in-one pills to long-acting injectables.

Selecting the right HIV treatment in partnership with your health care providers is just the beginning of your wellness journey. Regularly addressing your overall physical and mental health is also important. To get and stay healthy over the long term, having a group of providers you trust to support you is essential.

The first step is to choose a primary care provider (PCP). This can be a physician or a nurse practitioner. Building trust with your PCP has less to do with their educational background and more to do with being able to communicate with them.

For many people, whether they are living with HIV or not, being honest with their PCP can be difficult. However, building the trust you seek requires communication. Providers often don't have enough time to attend to people adequately. Regardless, don't wait for your PCP to ask you questions. Be prepared not only to ask them questions but also to share how you're feeling—physically and mentally. For example, share whether you're having trouble adhering to your meds or are experiencing intolerable side effects. Writing down your questions and concerns in advance can help.

The next step is to choose the additional members of your health care team, which, depending on your circumstances, may include a nurse, a specialist or two, a social worker and others. This will take patience. As with your PCP, building trust will take time, but it will be well worth it. Surrounding yourself with trusted providers will go a long way to keeping you as healthy as possible.

Unfortunately, sometimes it may not be possible to build trust with your PCP or other health care team members. Before deciding to change providers, though, share your concerns. Again,

conversation is key. As with many relationships in life, the other person may not be aware of how you feel. Let them know before you make a move. If you do decide to change a provider, make sure to find a new one before letting go of the current one.

To find providers near you, visit [HIV.gov](https://www.hiv.gov) or the [POZ Health Services Directory](https://www.poz.com/health-services-directory).

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