

HIV Treatment

Treatment for HIV has come a long way. Many treatments are now a once-a-day pill with few side effects. Long-acting injectable treatment is also becoming more widely available, making treatment even easier.

A medical provider will help determine what option will be best for you. With proper care, you can become virally suppressed and eventually undetectable.

What does UNDETECTABLE mean?

People who are living with HIV and taking their medication as directed can achieve viral suppression. Viral suppression means that you are living with HIV, but the virus is so well-controlled that it will not be detected on a viral load (HIV RNA) test, meaning you are undetectable.

It's important to know that people who are undetectable for 6 months or longer **WILL NOT** transmit HIV through sexual contact.

If you have ever seen U=U, it means **undetectable = untransmittable**.

How would I pay for care?

The state of Colorado has many resources available when it comes to helping its residents pay for HIV care. Our parent organization, **Colorado Health Network**, has insurance navigators that can help you enroll in programs that can pay for medication and care. There are many options available for assistance.

What if I'm unknown to the government?

Not a problem. The services we provide and the care that you can access is not dependent on your citizenship status. Seeking medical care does not affect your status at all.

How do I start these services?

If you have recently tested positive, you should get a confirmatory test. This test can be done with

Denver Public Health

660 Bannock St. Suite 2860
303-602-3652

Colorado Health Network

6260 E Colfax Ave
303-962-5317

Planned Parenthood

Multiple locations
303-832-5069

Previously Diagnosed and Fallen Out of Care?

Life happens and sometimes people fall out of care. **Colorado Health Network** is here to help you get back into care. You can reach our admission team and get with a case manager by calling **303-837-1501**.

If you are not interested in case management but would like information about accessing treatment, please call **970-260-9454**.

What else should I know?

You can visit our parent company's website **coloradohealthnetwork.org** for more information. Educating yourself on HIV will help to enhance your perspective. The internet is full of outdated/incorrect information, so please be sure to get your information from your provider or a trusted source like the CDC or HIV.gov. The most important things to know are:

- **You are MORE than a virus!**
- **You will have sex again**
- **Support is all around you**
- **You are NOT alone**

HIV Guide



hey Denver!

Queer-Focused Sexual Health Center

HeyDenver.org
303-962-2880

What To Expect After You Have Tested Positive

- HeyDenver can provide confirmatory testing, or we can make you an appointment for a confirmatory test at CHN or Denver Health.
- If your confirmatory test is a true positive, you can request a case manager to help you with every step of connecting to care, including getting on health insurance and accessing treatment.

Colorado also has funds for people living with HIV that are in place to help with:

- Treatment and medication costs
- Rental assistance
- Financial assistance
- Food and transportation services

These services are available to you! **Your gender, sexual orientation, race, language or citizenship status will NOT affect the care you are entitled to receive.**

Our parent organization can offer counseling, case management, and medical care. The state of Colorado has staff that will also contact you to assist with informing partners. These services are anonymous and voluntary in Colorado.

Who should I tell?

Disclosing your status can be a very intimidating task, but here are a few things to consider:

- You don't have to figure this out alone. Talking to a case manager or a therapist can help with this process.
- You do not have to disclose your status until you're ready.
- Having a supportive friend, family member, or partner that can help you navigate this challenging time is beneficial for you.

Symptoms

- Fever
- Chills
- Rash
- Sore Throat
- Swollen Lymph Nodes
- Night Sweats
- Fatigue
- Muscle Aches

Symptoms occur 2 to 4 weeks after infection and may last several weeks. Some people do not experience symptoms at all. These symptoms are common to many illnesses, so symptoms should not be used to diagnose or speculate status.

Testing is the only way to determine if you have HIV.

What If I Just Tested Positive?

- Take a breath. Being diagnosed with HIV can be shocking and upsetting, but with proper care, education, and treatment, you can live a long, healthy and normal life.
- This is not to say that living with HIV doesn't come with challenges, but it's no longer the death sentence it was once perceived to be.
- Point of care tests like the ones HeyDenver gives are considered a preliminary test, and confirmatory testing must be done on all reactive (positive tests). **You need a confirmatory test.**

There are people all around you that can help you. HeyDenver will help you start care. We recommend you begin considering the following:

1. Become informed on your diagnosis and what it really means.
2. Find support. This might be a close friend, a therapist, or community group.
3. Find a provider and start treatment. HeyDenver can help you with this.
4. Improve your overall health. This might mean watching your diet or being mindful of your mental health.

What is HIV?

- HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. If HIV is not treated, it can lead to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).
- HIV in the body will enter your CD4 cells (cells that fight off infections) and use them to create more copies of the HIV virus, destroying the CD4 cell in the process. People with low CD4 Cells have a harder time fighting off simple infections, which can lead to opportunistic infections. The HIV virus causes AIDS when your CD4 count falls below 200.
- There is no cure for HIV/AIDS, but there are many treatment options that we will go over in another section.

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV can be transmitted through the following fluids:

1. Blood
2. Semen
3. Vaginal fluids
4. Breast/chest Milk
5. Rectal fluids
6. Pre-seminal fluids (pre-cum)

One or more of these fluids has to be present for HIV infection to occur. These fluids must come in contact with a mucous membrane or damaged tissue, or be directly injected into the bloodstream (from a needle or syringe) for transmission to occur. Mucous membranes are found inside the rectum, vagina, penis, and mouth

Contact with dried blood, dried semen, or other fluids poses little to no risk. You CANNOT get HIV through casual contact.

Below are ways that HIV is commonly passed:

1. Condomless anal or vaginal/front hole sex with someone who has a detectable viral load (positive for HIV)
2. Mother to child transmission
3. Sharing needles or works with someone who has a detectable viral load.