

A guide to protecting your partner from HIV transmission

Information for patients



Dealing with an HIV diagnosis

When you are HIV positive it is important for you to protect your current (and future) sexual partners so you do not pass HIV onto them.

Some people find it difficult to discuss their HIV diagnosis with their sexual partners. This can be especially true when you are newly diagnosed with HIV as many people often find this a confusing and an emotional time.

This guide is designed to help you when it comes to telling your partner/s of your HIV diagnosis.

The benefits of informing your sexual partner/s

One of the benefits of telling your sexual partner/s about your diagnosis is so they can decide whether they want to have their own test for HIV:

- If they find they are also HIV positive they will then have access to good medical care and support.
- If they are HIV negative you can protect them from becoming HIV positive.

There are also legal implications if you knowingly infect your partner with HIV after you have received your diagnosis.

Criminal prosecutions for HIV transmission

It is a criminal offence if you do not take precautions to protect your partner from contracting HIV after you have been diagnosed. The main criminal offence this is known as 'Reckless Transmission'.

Reckless Transmission

You may be guilty of Reckless HIV Transmission if you have sex when:

- **you knew that you had HIV**
- **you understood how HIV is transmitted**
- **you had sex with someone who didn't know you had HIV**
- **you had sex without a condom**
- **you have passed HIV on to that person.**

NB: This only applies to England and Wales. Scottish law is different.¹

Further information about HIV and the law can be found online from the National Aids Trust (NAT) website:

www.nat.org.uk/Our-thinking/Law-stigma-and-discrimination/Criminal-prosecutions.aspx

How you can protect yourself from passing on HIV to your partner

The best way to do this is by using condoms whenever you have sex.

If you use drugs which have to be injected you should also avoid sharing needles.

Condoms offer good protection but sometimes they can split or come off during sex.

If a condom splits or you have not used one, then your partner can take PEPSE (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis following a Sexual Exposure). PEPSE is a 28 day short course of HIV treatment given to people who may have been exposed to HIV. It is used to reduce the risk of them becoming HIV positive.

It needs to be taken as soon as possible and within 72 hours from the time they were exposed to HIV. This is why we encourage you to inform your sexual partners as soon as possible after you have received your HIV positive diagnosis, so they can ask for PEPSE if needed.

PEPSE should not be viewed as a 'morning after' pill to take on a regular basis, as there are no guarantees that it will be effective.

Health adviser support

You can talk through your concerns with a health adviser.

Health advisers can offer suggestions on how best to help you tell your partner/s of your HIV diagnosis. They may:

- arrange an appointment to see you on your own to discuss your concerns before informing your partner
- look at different strategies and ways to help you tell your partner
- see both you and your partner together, should you wish, and support you in telling your partner
- give good information about safer sex, condom use and PEPSE
- talk about having families in the future and planning pregnancy
- answer any questions you have about HIV.

How to access the health adviser

- Ask your clinic doctor to see a health adviser at the end of your medical clinic appointment.
- Call us and arrange to come in and see a health adviser at a time that suits you.

**To arrange an appointment with the health advisers,
please call us on**

01865 231 231

(select option 3)

For more information about HIV and the support available
please visit our website:

www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/library.aspx

