

HIV/AIDS

Empire BlueCross BlueShield HealthPlus has a care management program for HIV/AIDS. This program will help you better understand and manage your HIV/AIDS. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your lifestyle. You do not have to join the program. You are enrolled as a member of Empire.

Living with HIV/AIDS

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the immune system. It makes it hard for the body to fight infection and disease. HIV is the same virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), which raises a person's risk of developing certain cancers and infections.

We want you to know you can take control. Simple steps like taking your medications correctly, eating healthy, exercising and following your treatment plan can make a real difference.

We will keep your doctor informed of your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better manage your HIV/AIDS.

Things to know:

- Your immune system helps you fight infection and illness.
- White blood cells are an important part of your immune system. HIV kills certain white blood cells called CD4+ cells. If too many cells are killed, your body can't fight infection or other illnesses.
- HIV infection may progress to AIDS. People who have AIDS have a low number of CD4+ cells. They can get infections that healthy people don't get.
- Having HIV does not mean you have AIDS. Many people with HIV/AIDS are able to live long and active lives.
- We can give you more information to help you manage your HIV/AIDS.

How HIV/AIDS is treated:

- Your doctor will take tests to monitor the HIV and how your immune system is working.
- You and your doctor can talk about your treatment options.
- Taking your medicines exactly as prescribed can help you stay healthy. It is important not to miss any doses.

How to take your HIV/AIDS medications:

- Medications for HIV/AIDS are called antiretroviral (anti-retro-viral) drugs.

- Taking antiretroviral drugs is not a cure for your HIV, but they may help you to stay healthy for a long time.
- It is important to take your medication on time. If you miss a dose or are late taking a dose, it may not work as well.
- Talk to your doctor before taking new medications. These include medications that do not need a prescription.
- We can help you understand how your medications work.

What you can do to stay healthy:

- Quit smoking. People with HIV have a greater chance of having a heart attack or getting lung cancer. Smoking can increase your risk even more. We have programs, and there are medications that can assist you in stopping smoking.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet to keep your immune system strong.
- Get regular exercise to reduce stress and improve the quality of your life.
- Don't use illegal drugs and limit how much alcohol you use.
- Talk to your doctor about other things you can do to stay healthy.

Support to help you manage your HIV/AIDS:

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your HIV/AIDS.
- We can assist you in finding community programs and resources in your area.
- Tips to talk with your doctor and get the most out of your visit:
 1. Ask any questions you may have about your infection. You can write them down and take them with you to your visit.
 2. Follow your doctor's advice. If you have questions or concerns, let your doctor know.
 3. Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you are taking.

Important screenings:

- Depression
- Other health conditions
- Preventive care screenings such as wellness checkups, mammograms and Pap tests

For more helpful information on managing HIV/AIDS

- [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#)
- [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#)
- [The Body: The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource](#)
- [AIDSInfoNet.org](#)

Sources:



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* The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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cdc.gov/hiv/, accessed November 8, 2013.

* AIDSInfoNet.org

<http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/hiv-aids-health-topics/>, accessed November 8, 2013.

*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely,
accessed November 8, 2013.

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