

Dating and HIV ^[1]

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Meeting Someone

Dating can be tricky for anyone, but if you are living with HIV (HIV+), you have some extra things to think about. Two important things to consider are:

1. Whom do I date (positive or negative person)?
2. When do I tell him/her?

If you are looking for a positive partner, consider going to places (online and in person) where you will meet other HIV+ people. These include HIV focused support groups, conferences, or dating websites such as www.hivnet.com [2], www.pozmatch.com [3], <http://personals.poz.com> [4], www.positivesingles.com [5], and www.hivpoz.net [6].

If it does not matter to you whether your partner is positive or negative, you can focus more on traditional methods ? singles events, places of worship, internet dating websites, online dating/personals ads, or networking through friends.

Disclosure

For many HIV+ women, the big issue is [disclosure](#) [7]. How and when do you tell? There is no one easy or perfect way to tell someone you are living with HIV.

Often, it is not how or when you tell, but whom you tell. If a potential partner is going to find your status unacceptable, it may not matter when you tell him/her. Similarly, if a person is going to accept you and your diagnosis, timing of disclosure may not matter (as long as you tell before having sex).

There are two main approaches to when to tell:

Tell and Kiss

Tell before the first kiss, often before the first date.

- Plus side: Less emotional attachment before a possible rejection
- Minus side: More people find out that you have HIV

Kiss and Tell

Wait until after a few dates when you feel comfortable with the person.

- Plus side: No need to disclose to every date; more privacy

- Minus side: Potential "why didn't you tell me before?" reaction

Is one of these approaches better than the other? Not really ? it is a personal choice.

Tell Before Sex

Although you may be tempted to wait to disclose your status until after a sexual encounter for fear of rejection or embarrassment, there are several important reasons NOT to do this:

1. You can expose your partner to HIV
2. Even if you practice safer sex [8], and even if your partner is not infected by the contact, it is illegal in many states and countries to engage in sex without disclosing
3. If you have unprotected sex, you are in danger, too. You can still get other STDs [9], such as herpes, chlamydia, or another strain of HIV.
4. Most people lose their trust in sexual partners who hide important information. How would you feel if a date waited until after the two of you had sex to mention that he or she was married?
5. You may increase the chances that your partner will react with anger or violence [10]

HIV Dating Tips

- Have "the talk" well before you find yourself in a sexual situation
- Tell the other person when you are both sober
- Read up on HIV, safer sex [8], and HIV transmission [11]. It will make it easier for you to talk about being HIV+.
- If you date an HIV+ person, do not spend so much time caring for him or her that you do not care for yourself
- If you are concerned about a really negative or possibly violent reaction, consider disclosing in a public place or with an HIV advocate present
- Get advice from those who have done this before. Attend a support group for HIV+ women and ask others how they handle disclosure and dating.
- Be prepared for rejection. It is important to remember that dating is a process of finding the right person for you. Whether or not you are HIV+, dating almost always includes some rejection and almost everyone has some trial runs before finding that special person!

Other HIV+ Dating Issues

Some HIV+ women find it hard to think about dating because they feel less desirable or less appealing than HIV-negative women. It is important to remember that there is much more to you than your HIV. Your HIV status is not a reflection of your self-worth; try not to let it affect your standards. You do not have to "settle" for being alone or being with a person who is wrong for you because you are living with HIV.

There is no need to be afraid to have love in your life. Look for a loving relationship with a person who wants to be with you for you. Sex and being sexy [12] can be important and exciting parts of your relationship. If you feel worried or guilty about the possibility of infecting your partner, make sure you know how to protect him or her by practicing safer sex [8].

Many women feel ashamed of or embarrassed by their HIV status when dating. These feelings are normal. However, if these feelings last and prevent you from dating, or lead to [depression](#) [13] or isolation, it is important to get help. You may [find a support group or therapist](#) [14] helpful. Once you connect with others, you will probably begin to feel more self-confident. As you feel better about yourself, you will likely remember how loving you can be ? not just with yourself, but with others. And who knows? That love might turn into romance before too long.

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Additional Resources

Select the links below for additional material related to dating and HIV.

[Dating Issues for Women with HIV \(The Body\)](#) [37]

[Virtual You: Tips for Writing Your Personal Online Profile \(The Body\)](#) [38]

[HIV, Dating and Relationships \(Positive Women's Network\)](#) [39]

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[Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Dating But Were Afraid to Ask \(hivplusmag\)](#) [43]

[Dating with HIV: Two Seattle Women Share Their Stories \(MYNorthwest\)](#) [44]

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[What It's Like to Tell the Person You're Seeing You Have HIV \(Women's Health\)](#) [46]

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- [39] <http://pwn.bc.ca/hiv-community/hiv-dating-and-relationships/>
- [40] <http://pwn.bc.ca/hiv-community/hiv-dating-and-relationships/hiv-and-online-dating/>
- [41] <http://www.shetoshe.org/living-well-with-hiv/relationships/dating-with-hiv>
- [42] <http://www.babesnetwork.org/resources/ive-been-there-personal-stories/dating-and-hiv/>
- [43] <http://www.hivplusmag.com/issue-features/2012/04/25/everything-you-ever-wanted-know-about-dating-were-afraid-ask>
- [44] <http://mynorthwest.com/108/2076436/Dating-With-HIV-Two-Seattle-Women-Share-Their-Stories>
- [45] <http://www.hivplusmag.com/sex-dating/2014/01/17/black-womans-guide-dating-hiv>
- [46] <http://www.womenshealthmag.com/health/dating-with-hiv>