

NEWLY DIAGNOSED

10 TIPS

ON LIVING WELL WITH
HIV FOR ASIAN AND
PACIFIC ISLANDER MEN



ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER
WELLNESS CENTER





A PLAN TO SEE YOU THROUGH

You've been recently diagnosed with HIV and your first impulse may be to keep the news to yourself. But as you'll discover in the pages that follow, talking about your feelings and concerns with your doctor, your loved ones, and your support groups are just some of the positive actions you can take to help live life to the fullest. You'll also find advice on setting goals, understanding your health benefits, and knowing your legal rights.

As an Asian or a Pacific Islander man, you have unique cultural issues to face, and you'll find answers to many of these concerns in these pages. You are bound to run into challenges on this new journey you are undertaking, challenges that will require making smart decisions, keeping your friends, family, and social networks close to you, and staying on a Positive Path Forward™ in managing your HIV. This brochure will help to guide you along the way.

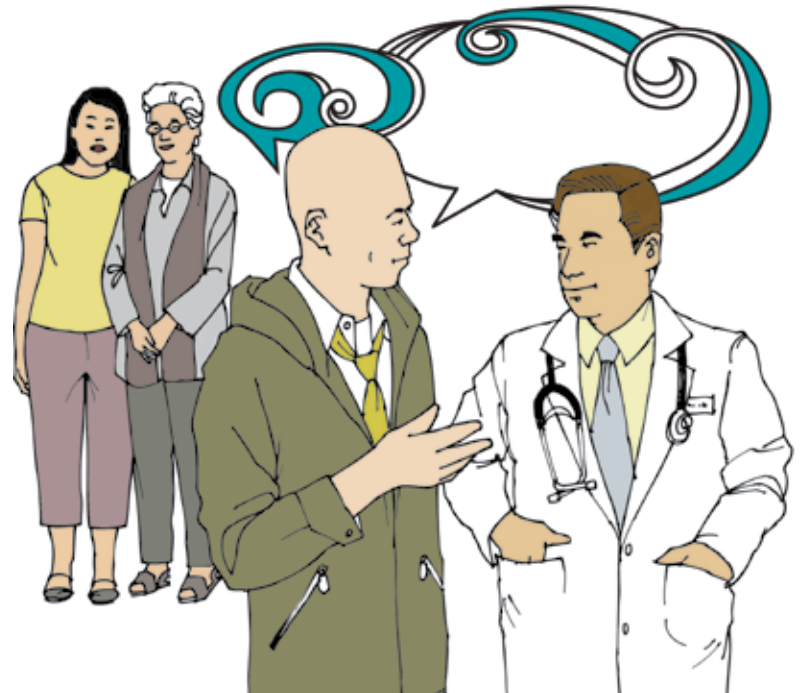
1

Fight stigma and shame.

You may have recently learned that you are living with HIV. And in order to find out about your diagnosis, you may have had to overcome many barriers. You may feel ashamed or afraid of what might happen if other people find out. You might also be afraid of disgracing your family. You might think people in the community will discriminate against your family because you are living with HIV. Believe it or not, these are common fears that many Asians and Pacific Islanders living with HIV have. You are not alone and there is help and support out there for you.

First and foremost, you will need to take care of yourself and stay healthy. This includes finding a doctor who understands your needs and speaks your language. You will also need to find support because you are stronger when you don't feel alone. Reach out to friends or family who will be there for you. Create new friendships through organizations and groups for other people living with HIV. They can help you come out to your family about your HIV status when you are ready. **People with strong, supportive relationships in their lives are more likely to stick to their treatment and medication.** Being healthy is nothing to be ashamed of, so make connections that can help you take care of yourself and your family.

OVERCOMING SHAME, BREAKING THE SILENCE.



Decide who should know. And when.

You may be thinking about who to tell about your HIV status. Perhaps you are feeling you have disappointed your family. At the same time, you may be worried about loved ones feeling obligated to help you. But you may be surprised at how supportive your loved ones can be.

You should consider telling close friends or trusted family members, because they can help you in times of need. **At the end of the day, it's up to you who you choose to tell, and when.**

Your sexual partners, however, must be made aware of your status. Give some thought about how you will handle this conversation. Use all the resources available to you to make this conversation easier: talk to your doctor or counselor, and ask for advice at your local AIDS service organizations (ASOs).

OPEN THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION.



3

Reach out.

Many people who are HIV positive are living healthier and rewarding lives, and have been for many years. Most will tell you about the importance of a support network. As an Asian or a Pacific Islander, you know how important family, friends, and community are in providing love, assistance, and support. But you may need more, and **there are many other groups and organizations available to you** to provide emotional, financial, and spiritual support. Here are just a few:

- AIDS service organizations (ASOs)
- Therapists and counselors experienced in providing HIV care
- Friends
- Partner/Spouse
- Social workers/Case managers
- Religious or spiritual groups
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) rights organizations
- Doctors or health care providers

FIND SUPPORT.



Healthy Tip

4

Get into care.

One of the most important steps you can take is finding a doctor who understands your health concerns. It may also be beneficial if he or she has experience treating LGBT and Asian and Pacific Islander people. In the past, you may have avoided talking about personal matters. Now, **you will need to be open and honest about many areas of your life** to help your doctor determine the HIV treatment that best fits your lifestyle needs.

Make sure you can understand your doctor. You could consider choosing doctors trained in Western and traditional medicine who come from the same country or region as you, who speak your language and dialect, and who understand your culture. Is there a nurse or physician's assistant who can help? If you can't find a doctor who speaks your native tongue, **ask for an interpreter or perhaps bring a trusted family member or friend along who is more fluent in English.**

In the back of the brochure, you'll find a list of resources to help you find professionals and service providers who speak your language.

FIND SOMEONE WHO SPEAKS YOUR LANGUAGE.



5

Western medicine is an important part of your HIV treatment.

Western medicine has made remarkable advances in HIV treatment. People with the virus are living longer and more productive lives. To get the most from improvements in therapy, it's important to talk to your doctor about your lifestyle needs. Do you have a demanding work schedule? Are you a caregiver? Do you travel often? Is traditional medicine important to you?

Talk to and work with your doctor if you believe your treatment isn't working for you. **If your medications are causing unpleasant side effects, ask if there are ways to manage these side effects or if there are other medications you can take.**

Your doctor is your partner in the fight against HIV, so make him or her aware of any drugs or other medications you are taking. It is especially important that you **tell them about any dietary supplements, or herbal or other traditional medicines you may be taking.** These products may cause adverse effects when combined with your HIV treatment.

YOUR DOCTOR IS YOUR PARTNER IN YOUR FIGHT AGAINST HIV.



6

Take your medication as directed.

It's important to take any medicine your doctor has prescribed and follow his or her directions closely. If you're like most people, you may not like to take medication. However, this is the most important action you can take.

Anything less may give the virus enough room to get stronger, making it harder to treat. So when you do begin your HIV therapy, or if you have already begun, be sure to take your medication as prescribed.

Find ways to make it work. Keep a pill organizer on your dresser. Put sticky notes on your bathroom mirror. Ask friends who are also on medication about how they stay on it. There are even programs that send reminders to your cell phone. **Sticking to your HIV therapy schedule is one of the best ways of fighting the virus.**

FIND WAYS TO STICK TO YOUR TREATMENT.



7

Set goals and stick to them.

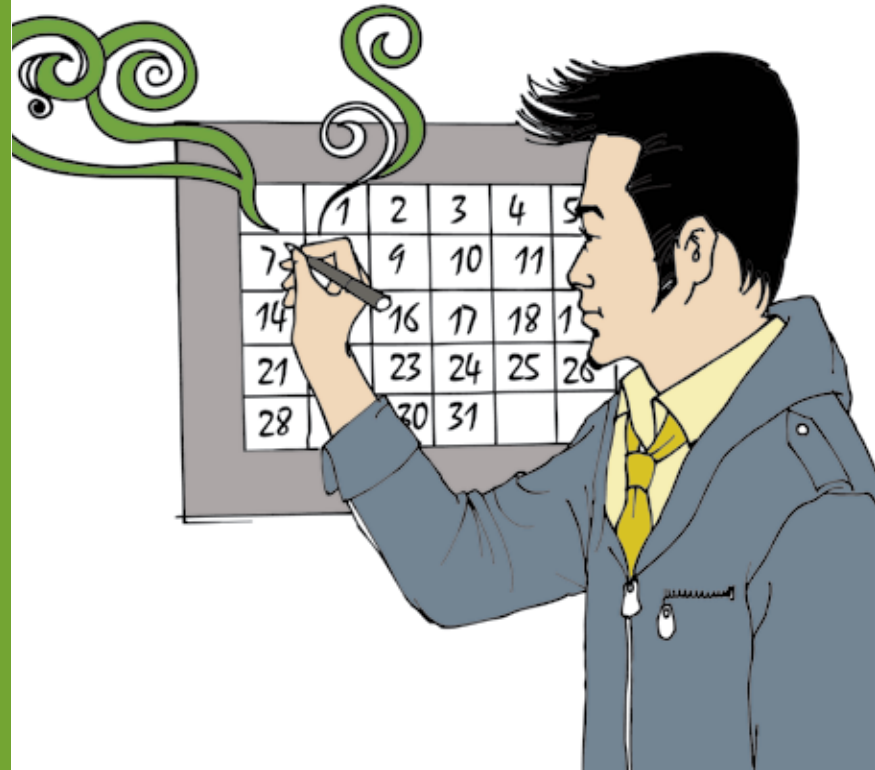
Fighting the virus is easier for Asian and Pacific Islanders when you have a plan.

Use a calendar to keep track of dates that are significant to your treatment.

Stay on The Positive Path Forward by eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and going for regular checkups. Keep track of your lab results, like your CD4 count, viral load, cholesterol, glucose levels, and other diseases like hepatitis. These help your doctor know when to start treatment and, once you're on treatment, how well you're doing on your medications.

If drugs or alcohol are a problem, this is the time to seek help. Drug use will only complicate your condition and cause more health concerns. There are organizations that can help. Talk to your ASO for more information.

HAVE A PLAN.



Healthy Tip

8

Look into your health benefits.

It's important to know how much of your HIV treatment your health insurance will cover. **You'll want to know if your policy will pay for doctor visits and prescription drugs** and what amount you are responsible for paying yourself. If you are getting new health insurance, you'll also want to know if your coverage pays for preexisting conditions.

If you are concerned about insurance coverage, there are resources available to help pay for treatment. Some of these include Medicare disability, Medicaid, HIV Drug Assistance Programs (HDAPs), pharmaceutical patient assistance programs, and community health clinics. If you need help finding out what's available to you, contact an ASO in your community. They can help you find the resources you need.

THERE IS HEALTH CARE AVAILABLE TO YOU.



9

Practice safer sex.

You might not be thinking about intimacy at this point in time, when you're dealing with the news of your HIV status. But the time will come when you're ready to have a physical relationship again. When that moment comes, be smart about what you're doing. **And being smart means practicing safer sex.**

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are still a concern for everyone, so use a condom. It doesn't just help protect your partner, it helps protect you too. But remember, **no protective method is 100% effective. Condom use cannot guarantee absolute protection from an STI.**

WHAT ABOUT SEX?



Healthy Tip 10


Legal help.

Living with HIV may present challenges that are best taken care of through the legal system. Problems that may arise include employment, housing, debt, a living will, partner's rights, or powers of attorney. In most cases, they can all be made better with legal help. Just remember, you have legal resources available to you no matter what your income or immigration status is. Even if you were diagnosed before you started the naturalization process, you still have rights in regard to your health care or other needs you may have. **The federal government has ended its ban on travel and immigration to the United States by people who are HIV-positive.**

Don't let your economic situation, gender, sexual orientation, or immigration status get in the way of your well-being. **Know your rights.** And, like finding a doctor, it may be helpful to contact a lawyer who speaks your language. If you need help finding legal assistance, refer to the list of language resources found in the back of this brochure or contact an ASO.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.



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YOU MAY BE UNCERTAIN ABOUT
THIS NEW PERIOD IN YOUR
LIFE, BUT THERE IS A LOT OF
SUPPORT AVAILABLE JUST FOR
YOU. LOOK FOR STRENGTH
WITHIN, ASK FOR SUPPORT
FROM YOUR LOVED ONES, AND
CONSULT WITH QUALIFIED,
CARING PROFESSIONALS.

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO GET
ON THE POSITIVE PATH FORWARD
TO SUCCESSFULLY MANAGING
YOUR HIV, AND THE TIME TO DO
IT IS NOW!

HIV/AIDS INFORMATION

Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center

1-415-292-3400

www.apiwellness.org

Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS

(APICHA)

1-212-334-7940

www.apicha.org

Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team

1-714-636-1349 (Garden City)

1-213-553-1830 (Los Angeles)

www.apaitonline.org

AIDS Services in Asian Communities

1-215-629-2300

www.asiac.org

Asian Pacific Health Care Venture

1-323-644-3880

www.aphcv.org

National AIDS Hotline (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

www.cdc.gov/hiv

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

(For the hearing impaired: 1-888-232-6348)

E-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov

AIDSinfo (National Institutes of Health)

www.aidsinfo.nih.gov

1-800-HIV-0440 (1-800-448-0440)

(For the hearing impaired: 1-888-480-3739)

E-mail: contactus@idsinfo.nih.gov

Life Foundation

1-808-521-2437

www.lifefoundation.org

Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) AIDS Hotline

www.gmhc.org

1-800-AIDS-NYC (1-800-243-7692) or 1-212-807-6655

(For the hearing impaired: 1-212-645-7470)

E-mail: hotline@gmhc.org

To learn more about living well with HIV
visit **www.HealthyWithHIV.com**