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Dating and HIV

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Table of Contents

- [Meeting Someone](#)
- [Disclosure](#)
- [Tell Before Sex](#)
- [HIV Dating Tips](#)
- [Other Dating Issues for People Living with HIV](#)

Meeting Someone

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

Whom do I date (another person living with HIV, or not)?

When do I tell him/her?

If you are looking for a partner living with HIV, consider going to places (online and in person) where you will meet other people living with HIV. These include HIV-focused support groups, conferences, or dating websites such as www.pozmatch.com, personals.poz.com, www.positivesingles.com, www.hivpassions.com, and www.hivpoz.net.

It is important to remember that there is much more to you than HIV.

If it does not matter to you whether your partner does or does not live with HIV, you can focus more on traditional methods – singles events, places of worship, internet dating websites, online dating/personals ads, or networking through friends. For more information on dating across HIV statuses, please see our fact sheet on [mixed-status \(serodifferent\) partnerships](#).

Disclosure

For many women living with HIV, the big issue is [disclosure](#). 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, the 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 are living with 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.

***Dating and Disclosure:** Hear two phenomenal leaders, Ci Ci Covin and Marissa Gonzalez, talk about their personal experiences and challenges with disclosure along their journeys living with HIV on this episode of A Girl Like Me LIVE!*

View other episodes in the [A Girl Like Me LIVE series](#)

Tell Before Sex

You may wish to wait to disclose your status until after a sexual encounter for fear of rejection or embarrassment. There are several reasons why it may be safer for you NOT to do this:

Even if you practice [safer sex](#) -- including having an undetectable [viral load](#), which [makes transmission to your partners impossible](#) -- and even if your partner does not acquire HIV from this contact, laws in many states and countries unfairly punish people living with HIV for engaging in sex without disclosing that they are living with HIV. To look at the HIV laws in each state of the US, go to this [website](#). For more information about this legal concern – including efforts by advocacy groups worldwide to change these unjust laws and practices – see our fact sheet on [HIV Criminalization](#).

If you have sex without condoms or other barriers, you are in danger, too. You can still get other [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#), such as [herpes](#), [chlamydia](#), or another strain of HIV.

Some 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?

You may increase the chances that your partner will react with anger or [violence](#)

HIV Dating Tips

- Consider having "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](#), [treatment as prevention](#), [HIV transmission](#) and [U=U](#) (no chance of transmitting HIV if you are on treatment and your viral load is undetectable with standard tests). It will make it easier for you to talk about living with HIV.
- If you date a person living with HIV, 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 a friend present. Also consider whether you really want to be with a person who might react in this way.
- Get advice from those who have done this before. Attend a [support group](#) for women living with HIV and ask others how they handle disclosure and dating.
- Remember that dating is a process of finding the right person for you. Whether or not you are living with HIV, dating almost always includes some rejection, and it is important to be prepared for that. Almost everyone has some trial runs before finding that special person!

Other Dating Issues for People Living with HIV

Some women living with HIV find it hard to think about dating because they feel less desirable or less appealing than women who do not live with HIV. It is important to remember that there is much more to you than 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](#) can be important and exciting parts of your relationship. If you feel worried or guilty about the possibility of transmitting HIV to your partner, remember that it is not possible if you are taking HIV drugs and your viral load stays undetectable. You can make sure you know how to protect one another by practicing other kinds of safer sex as well.

Though having HIV is nothing to be ashamed of, many women feel ashamed or embarrassed by their HIV status when dating. These feelings are normal. However, if these feelings continue and prevent you from dating, or lead to [depression](#) or isolation, it is important to get help. You may feel a good bit of relief even from telling one person you can trust. You may [find a support group or therapist](#) 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.

Additional Resources

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

- [Women With HIV: You Don't Have to Settle \(TheBody.com\)](#)
- [A Black Woman's Guide to Dating with HIV \(plus\)](#)
- [6 Tips For Writing The Perfect Online Dating Profile \(Huffpost\)](#)
- [45 Actually Good Tinder Bios to Help You Get All the Matches \(Cosmopolitan\)](#)
- [What It's Like to Tell the Person You're Seeing You Have HIV \(Women's Health\)](#)
- [Dating with HIV: Two Seattle Women Share Their Stories \(KIRO NewsRadio\)](#)
- [How to Disclose Your HIV Status to Someone You're Dating \(VeryWell Health\)](#)
- [How to Cope When You're Looking for Love but Finding HIV Stigma Instead \(POZ\)](#)
- [When Using Dating Apps, Disclosing My HIV Status Is Earned, Not Your Right to K...](#)
- [Looking for Love: Top HIV Dating Sites \(healthline\)](#)
- [5 Things an HIV-Negative Person Needs to Know When Dating a Positive Person \(PO...](#)
- [Sex + Dating with HIV in the Age of PrEP and U=U \(Positively Aware\)](#)
- [Everything You've Ever Wanted To Ask About Dating With HIV \(Huffpost UK\)](#)
- [The HIV-Positive Person's Guide to Sex and Dating, Part One \(them\)](#)
- [I'm starting a relationship with someone who has HIV, what do I need to know? \(...\)](#)
- [I Found Love \(and Love of Self\) After HIV, and You Can Too \(TheBody.com\)](#)



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