

## Fact or fiction?

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### **HIV is a gay disease**

There are heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual people living with HIV. HIV does not discriminate. It affects people from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and genders regardless of their sexuality.

### **HIV is a death sentence – I'm going to die**

There have been many advances in HIV treatments over the years and HIV is not the death sentence it was once thought to be. There are many HIV positive people living healthy and productive lives.

### **I don't think I am going to get through this**

Coming to terms with being HIV positive can be a difficult journey for some and each person comes to terms with their positive diagnosis in their own ways and it is important to remember that there are many people who are HIV positive leading full and active lives. There are many [services](#) [1] that can provide you with counselling and put you in touch with other HIV positive people, and this may help you to get through this. There are also sections in this booklet on coping strategies, and you may find some of the ideas useful.

### **I am going to infect the people I love**

Many people have this fear when they are first diagnosed, but just because you are HIV positive does not mean you are going to infect the people you love. HIV can only be transmitted through unprotected sex, from mother to child usually at delivery, breast milk and direct blood contact. It is not passed on by hugging, kissing, sharing cups, touching, rubbing or massage. (See page 48 for information on transmitting and preventing HIV)

### **I don't know who to tell**

It's advisable not to rush out and tell people straight away; however, you may wish to tell your partner, friends or family. There are many people you can talk to including Peer Support Workers at your [local AIDS Council](#) [1], your doctor, or other HIV positive people. These people can be a good starting point when you are trying to figure out who to tell and how to tell them.

### **HIV only affects people living in cities**

HIV does not only affect people living in large cities. There are HIV positive people living in small towns, rural communities and major cities in every state and territory around Australia.

### **I'll never be able to have children**

HIV positive people have the right to have children. In fact, there are many HIV positive women and a growing number of HIV positive men who have made the decision to have children. Thanks to the advances in our knowledge of HIV, there are ways that the risk of transmission can be reduced from mother to child and ways that HIV positive men can father children without passing on the [virus](#) [2]A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell..

## **Nobody will ever want to have sex with me again**

HIV positive people have the right to a full and active sex life. Being HIV positive does not mean that your partner or a potential partner will automatically reject you. In fact many people say that when they shared the news, they received support and it led to a greater level of intimacy in their [relationships](#) [3].

[◀ How will HIV change me? \[4\]up \[5\]Who should I tell? ▶ \[6\]](#)

### **Links:**

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/services>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/sex-and-relationships>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps/how-will-hiv-change-me>

[5] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps>

[6] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps/who-should-i-tell>