

Sex and Relationships

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You'll probably have a lot to deal with when you receive an HIV positive diagnosis. Maybe sex is the last thing on your mind or you might choose to have a lot of sex.

You might feel "infectious", angry or depressed, and this may result in a loss of sex drive, regardless of your partner's HIV status. However you are feeling right now, your feelings about sex will probably change over time. It's also important to remember that HIV positive people have the right to enjoy a healthy and active sex life. There are many people out there who will find you desirable regardless of your HIV status.

If you're in a relationship with someone who isn't HIV positive, you might not want to have sex because you're afraid of infecting your partner, husband or wife. These feelings are completely normal. You might also be feeling frightened and scared of getting sick, which can have an effect on your libido. It might help to talk to your partner, husband or wife about your feelings, which could lead to greater intimacy. It's worth pointing out that many people who have chosen to tell their partner, husband or wife have received support.

If you are not ready to have sex, there are many other intimate sexual activities you can enjoy that involve little or no risk such as kissing, massaging, mutual masturbation and oral sex. If you are planning to have penetrative anal or vaginal sex, the safest way to prevent transmission of HIV is to use condoms and water-based lube. Condoms can also protect you from other [STIs](#) [1][Sexually Transmissible (or Transmitted) Infection] Infections spread by the transfer of organisms from person to person during sexual contact. Also called venereal disease (VD) (an older public health term) or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). . Dams and gloves can also be used for protective sex (see page 33 for more information). If you're considering having casual sex with someone you don't know, you might have similar concerns about whether or not to disclose your status.

In some states it is illegal to have sex with someone without disclosing your status. However, some people choose not to tell people they have sex with. Others decide to tell people up front. The choice is an individual one. Deciding how and when to tell someone you're HIV positive – whether it is a long-term partner or a casual partner – is a personal and sometimes difficult decision. There is no easy way to disclose your HIV status. Talking to a counsellor, peer support worker or other HIV positive people can be helpful.

Amelia: "It certainly hasn't affected my relationship. If anything, it probably makes us more willing to work on things."

- [What is safe sex?](#) [2]

◀ [Coping Strategies: A few weeks later](#) [3] [up](#) [4] [What is safe sex?](#) ▶ [2]

- [Sex and relationships](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/188>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps/what-is-safe-sex>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/next-steps/coping-strategies-a-few-weeks-later>

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