

COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV IN MINNESOTA

The purpose of this resource is to answer questions about your health care and how to take care of your health. This is a rapidly evolving situation. This resource will be updated frequently, but we recommend checking reputable sources like the [Minnesota Governor's Office](#), [Minnesota Department of Health](#), and the [CDC](#) for the most up to date information.

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly through close contact from person to person. People who are infected but do not show symptoms can spread the virus to others; the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. Continue to follow the [Stay Safe MN guidance](#) and [wash your hands often](#). If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Many but not all people with HIV have additional conditions that increase their risk for severe COVID-19. These may include:

- **Older age** - half of people living with HIV in Minnesota are over 50 years of age
- **People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility**
- **Chronic underlying medical conditions** - including but not limited to chronic lung disease (including moderate to severe asthma), smoking, severe heart conditions, hypertension, diabetes, sickle cell disease, obesity (BMI >30), chronic kidney disease, liver disease, and cancer; for more information [click here](#).
- **Low-functioning immune system** - occurs when someone has a low CD4 T-cell count, is not receiving antiretroviral treatment, or is not taking HIV medications daily

IF YOU ARE AT HIGHER RISK FOR ILLNESS FROM COVID-19

If you have **one or more of the above risk factors**, follow the steps below:

- Work to become virally suppressed if you are not already, including seeking medical care if you are not currently engaged with an HIV care provider. Call a provider to determine the best plan for you to move forward, or call the MN AIDSLine (612-373-2437) to talk through different clinic options
- Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra medications to have on hand in case there is a COVID-19 outbreak in your community requiring you to stay home for a prolonged period of time
- Continue taking recommended medicines and closely follow the guidance of your health care provider
- Ensure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms if you contract COVID-19.
- Continue to [stay at home](#) and reduce physical contact with others; [practice social distancing](#) when you go out and wear a mask in public spaces
- Eat right, try to get at least 8 hours of sleep, and reduce stress as much as possible to keep your immune system healthy
- [Maintain a social network](#); stay in touch with others by telephone, email, or other remote technology. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you get sick; and maintaining a social network will also keep spirits up while isolated or quarantined

SUGGESTIONS FROM LOCAL HIV PROVIDERS IN MINNESOTA *

- Take **physical distancing** seriously
- If you are living with HIV but not on medication, reach out and call a provider or the MN AIDSLine (612-373-2437) to determine the best plan for you to move forward

- Some providers in MN have implemented alternating telehealth and in person visits for stable HIV patients. Your clinic should determine if in person or telehealth care is required. Call your clinic for more information
- At this time in the pandemic healthcare centers are very good at preventing transmission of COVID-19 in the medical setting; some providers have resumed regular in person visits and labs for HIV management
- **Providers are encouraging all patients to get the COVID-19 vaccine when eligible.** If you have questions or concerns about the vaccine talk to your healthcare provider to receive supplemental information
- Continue to work from home, if possible. If your employer requires a note, ask your provider. If you are not able to work from home, practice physical distancing at work (stay at least 6 feet apart) and avoid people with a cough
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle; staying healthy will help your immune system fight off infection should it occur. Reduce smoking/vaping, limit alcohol consumption, monitor your blood sugar if you are diabetic, take medications for high blood pressure as prescribed, take care of your mental health, etc.

*These recommendations are not intended to replace professional medical advice, but rather to be a helpful resource for you during this challenging time

IF YOU ARE FEELING SICK

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a **fever** and [symptoms including](#) a **cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell:**

1. Stay home and [follow CDC advice](#)
2. Call your healthcare provider or a triage nurse for medical advice. Let them know your symptoms and tell them you may have COVID-19. This will help them take care of you and keep other people from getting infected or exposed
3. Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis if possible

Many people with COVID-19 are not sick enough to be hospitalized and can recover at home; discuss with your medical team and follow their recommendations. **Get medical attention immediately if you have any of the emergency warning signs listed below:**

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

GETTING VACCINATED FOR COVID-19

Minnesota providers are encouraging people sign up to be vaccinated. You can find your vaccine using the ["Find Your Vaccine"](#) tool:

- As this is a rapidly evolving rollout you can stay updated on your eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine and connect to vaccine opportunities in your area when they become available by signing up for the [Minnesota Vaccine Connector](#)
- There is misinformation circulating about the vaccine, look to the CDC for the [facts about the COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Make sure all vaccinations are up to date including the influenza and pneumococcal vaccines to avoid vaccine preventable diseases.

GETTING TESTED

- It is important to get tested if you have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or have been in **close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19**
- The State of Minnesota has a tool to help [find a testing location](#) with information on who each site is testing and how to get a test. You can also use [Minnesota's no-cost test at home program](#)
- The CARES Act requires that COVID-19 testing is free; this applies to the test only

MASKING GUIDANCE

Masking is an important measure to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. [The CDC recommends that masks:](#)

- Should have two or more layers of washable, tightly woven, breathable material
- Must cover your mouth and nose and should not have an exhalation valve or vent
- Should fit snugly on the face and have no gaps

IMPORTANT RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV

- [COVID-19: What People With HIV Should Know \(CDC\)](#): This page answers a lot of questions about HIV and COVID-19
- [Find My Vaccine](#): This page provides information on COVID-19 vaccination sites near you, the community vaccination program, and contact information for the vaccine hotlines
- [MN Vaccine Connector](#): The Minnesota COVID-19 Vaccine Connector is a tool that helps Minnesotans find out when, where, and how to get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- [AIDSLINE](#): The Minnesota AIDSLine is Minnesota's statewide information and referral service that can answer your questions about HIV and link you to help including food services, housing, transportation, health insurance, and medical case management
- [HIV and AIDS Community Service Directory During COVID-19](#): Minnesota AIDSLine staff have gathered information from other AIDS Service Organizations to create a centralized list of services affected by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).
- [Twin Cities HIV Clinical Care and Services Brochure](#): A brochure of different locations across the Twin Cities that provide HIV care, including information on the services they provide
- [Additional Recommendations for COVID-19 \(And Other Issues You May Be Facing\)](#): A document with further recommendations and resources for COVID-19
- [Twin Cities/Greater MN Syringe Exchange Calendar](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\): Reducing Stigma \(CDC\)](#): People with HIV have lived experience in dealing with stigma and can be allies in reducing COVID-19 stigma, this page addresses how to reduce stigma and help prevent the spread of rumors about COVID-19

Note: Be wary of misinformation, myths, and false recommendations surrounding COVID-19. Always check the CDC website for accurate guidance.



MATEC (Midwest AIDS Training & Education Center), located at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, provides health care professionals involved in the field of HIV clinical care and management with up-to-date educational opportunities.

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