

# PARTNER/SPOUSE

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## HOW SHOULD YOU TELL YOUR INTIMATE PARTNER YOU HAVE HIV?

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Many people worry that they will lose an important—or even their only—support system when they tell their intimate partners that they are HIV-positive. It's perfectly normal to feel nervous, embarrassed, or even fearful of your partner's reaction, which may be verbal or even physical.

Disclosure is a process, so it may take you several conversations. It's possible that your spouse or partner's reactions to learning your status may change as time goes by. To make the disclosure process as open as possible:

- Have your conversations in a safe and secure place. Choose a space that provides privacy, yet offers comfort and familiarity.
- Tell your spouse or partner that you have some important news to share.
- Be prepared to talk about your diagnosis in a clear way and provide basic information about what it means to live with HIV.
- Do not attempt to discuss your diagnosis if you feel you do not have a clear sense about what it means.
- It may be helpful to have some information, (printed material or websites) available to help with any questions your spouse or partner may have.
- Be prepared to explain that HIV can be contracted during unprotected sex and provide your partner with information about HIV testing and where he or she can get tested.

For more information on HIV that may be helpful in the disclosure process with your spouse or partner, see CDC's [Basic Information \(http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/basic/index.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/basic/index.htm)

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## FACT SHEETS & PRINT MATERIALS

- [STDcheckup.org - HIV Partner Counseling and Referral Services \(http://www.stdcheckup.org/provider/media/partner\\_referral.pdf\)](http://www.stdcheckup.org/provider/media/partner_referral.pdf) [\[http://www.aids.gov/external-disclaimer.html\]](http://www.aids.gov/external-disclaimer.html)  
This fact sheet details three options for disclosure of an HIV diagnosis to a spouse or partner: self-disclosure, dual disclosure, and third-party disclosure. It also provides helpful preparation questions and tips.

## RELATED TOPICS ON AIDS.GOV

- [Mixed-Status Couples \(/hiv-aids-basics/staying-healthy-with-hiv-aids/friends-and-family/mixed-status-couples/\)](/hiv-aids-basics/staying-healthy-with-hiv-aids/friends-and-family/mixed-status-couples/)
- [Marriage/Dating \(/hiv-aids-basics/staying-healthy-with-hiv-aids/friends-and-family/marriage-dating/\)](/hiv-aids-basics/staying-healthy-with-hiv-aids/friends-and-family/marriage-dating/)


## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Do have to tell my spouse or partner?

Though each state has different policies and procedures related to partner notification, each does require that all past, present, and future sex and needle-sharing partners be notified of a potential exposure to HIV. Health departments can

assist with the notifications.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Children Now & CDC - [Talking with Kids about HIV and AIDS](http://www.childrennow.org/index.php/learn/twk_aids) ([http://www.childrennow.org/index.php/learn/twk\\_aids](http://www.childrennow.org/index.php/learn/twk_aids))   
(<http://www.aids.gov/external-disclaimer.html>)

Talk with Your Kids is a national initiative to encourage parents to talk with their children early and often about tough issues like sex, HIV/AIDS, violence, and alcohol and drug abuse.

- CDC - [Recommendations for Partner Services Programs for HIV Infection, Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydial Infection](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5709a1.htm) (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5709a1.htm>)

CDC strongly recommends that all persons with newly diagnosed or reported HIV infection, or early syphilis, receive partner services with active health department involvement. STD and HIV partner services offer STD, HIV, and other public health programs an opportunity for collaboration to deliver comprehensive services to clients, improve program efficiency, and maximize the positive effects on public health.

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