

Just Diagnosed



**BAO** | B I R M I N G H A M  
A I D S O U T R E A C H



# You just tested positive. Now what?

Being diagnosed HIV positive can be a scary and confusing time for you as well as your friends and family. The main thing to remember is:

**You are not alone.**

**You can live a long, normal life with HIV.**

Although adjusting to this new life may be an emotional road as well as a physical one, with medical help, education, support, and effort you can live a healthy life with HIV. It's time to be proactive about your health. It is also important to educate yourself and others about HIV. The more you know, the better you will understand the virus and the steps you need to take to keep yourself and your partner(s) healthy.

First, you will need to contact the health department for an interview. BAO's Education Director, Josh Bruce, can accompany you to the health department. To contact the Jefferson County Health Department call 205.930.1175.

It's very important to see a doctor as soon as possible after your diagnosis. You and your doctor need to evaluate your health and begin to plan for the future. We can help! BAO can supply you with different medical options whether it is local HIV clinics or private HIV specialist doctors. We can also coach you on what to expect within the first few months when starting medical care.

Some quick advice before seeing your doctor is to make a list and write down any questions you have before your appointments. This can help you make the most of your visits. Also, consider finding a friend to go with you to make sure your questions get answered.



## Getting Connected



### **Case Manager/Social Worker**

BAO has case managers or social workers who know their local social service system and can help you find resources. We can help you solve some issues you might face, like finding transportation, housing, and ways to cover your health care costs. BAO offers these services for free. Contact the main office at 205-322-4197 to make an appointment.

### **Support Groups/Counseling**

Support groups and/or counseling are one way to find a secure place to talk about your life. Studies show that individuals who take part in support groups and/or counseling have better health and quality of life. BAO offers several different support groups based on needs and for specific populations. BAO also provides free one-on-one counseling with a licensed professional counselor for individuals, spouse/partner, and family members.



## Telling Others



### **It's Important to have Support**

Telling others about your HIV status can feel frightening. It is normal to feel insecure or afraid about your peers or your family finding out your HIV status. But sharing your HIV status may help you cope, and it is important for you to have support from people in your life. Sharing this news can actually improve your health, mentally and physically, by relieving the stress of keeping your HIV status a secret.

### **Take Your Time**

You don't have to tell anyone your HIV status that you don't want to, and you don't have to tell your HIV status to everyone all at once. Finding people who can support you can make a big difference and help you stay healthy while improving your quality of life. Take your time when planning who to tell about your HIV status, choosing carefully who you want to tell and who you think will react well to the news.



## Terminology

**AIDS**- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, The latter stages of HIV infection.

**Adherence**- taking your medications exactly as prescribed.

**ADAP**- Federally funded programs that provide medications and other HIV-related services to low-income, uninsured, and underinsured people with HIV/AIDS.

**CD4**- also called T-cells, are specialized cells in your immune system that fights off infection. It is also HIV's target.

**CD4 Count**- a measurement of how well your immune system is working, and how far HIV has progressed. A normal CD4 count is between 500-1500. It is recommended to start treatment if this number falls below 500.

**HAART**- Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy. These regime suppresses HIV replication.

**HIV**- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**Resistance Testing**- Laboratory testing to identify which, if any antiretroviral (ARV) drugs will not be effective against a person's specific strain of HIV. Resistance testing is used to guide selection of an HIV regimen when initiating or changing antiretroviral therapy.

**Undetectable Viral Load**- When the amount of HIV in the blood is too low to be detected with a viral load (HIV RNA) test. Antiretroviral (ARV) drugs may reduce a person's viral load to an undetectable level; however, this does not mean the person is cured.

**Viral Load**- The amount of HIV in a sample of blood. Viral Load (VL) is reported as the number of HIV RNA copies per milliliter of blood. An important goal of antiretroviral therapy (ART) is to suppress a person's VL to an undetectable level.



## Resources

### **Birmingham AIDS Outreach**

205.322.4197

[birminghamaidsoutreach.org](http://birminghamaidsoutreach.org)

### **UAB's 1917 Clinic**

205.934.1917

[uab.edu/1917clinic](http://uab.edu/1917clinic)

### **AIDS Alabama**

205.324.9822

[aidsalabama.org](http://aidsalabama.org)

### **Jefferson County Health Department**

205.933.9110

[jcdh.org](http://jcdh.org)

### **Our favorite links:**

[thebody.com](http://thebody.com)

[cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

[aids.gov](http://aids.gov)