



Care Considerations For Women Living With HIV

Provider Tool

Women living with HIV have unique needs that evolve throughout the stages of life. These needs require special, individualized consideration and care.

The following considerations have been compiled to help support meaningful discussion between your patients and you.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR PATIENT

Patients may feel nervous, especially during their first visit. Consider using welcoming statements and simple questions to increase your patient's comfort, which may lead to a more productive appointment:

- ❑ Introduce yourself and explain your role in their care
- ❑ Ask "getting to know you" questions (i.e., name, first time at clinic)

SPEAKING WITH PATIENTS

- ❑ Let patients know they are in a safe environment and conversations are confidential
- ❑ Use empowering and encouraging words to spark active decision-making
- ❑ Remember patients may be judged, stigmatized and discriminated against in their daily lives; be cognizant of additional needs

LIVING WITH HIV: CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ Think about using simple definitions of medical terms to help ensure patient understanding
- ❑ Help your patient understand how to reduce HIV transmission risk; provide safer sex guidance, communicating the importance and rationale for using protection
- ❑ Address sexual rights (i.e., avoiding violence or being forced into sex)
- ❑ Refer the patient to local prevention activities
- ❑ Encourage women to integrate their partner into support and care services (i.e., testing and counseling)
- ❑ Describe importance of testing for sexually transmitted infections (STIs); define key STIs, signs and symptoms
- ❑ Discuss importance of disclosure and overcoming related barriers
- ❑ Counsel on impact of alcohol and drug use

PREGNANCY

- ❑ Provide clear information on antiretroviral prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection in infants and how to manage if positive
- ❑ Review treatment recommendations for women who are or may be seeking to get pregnant
- ❑ Explain considerations around vertical transmission and needs specific to different patient populations
- ❑ Provide appropriate information so that women can make informed reproductive choices
- ❑ Provide information on self-care during pregnancy (i.e., nutrition)
- ❑ Emphasize importance of having skilled birth attendants during labor and delivery
- ❑ Provide information on the risks of transmission via breastfeeding and suggest alternatives
- ❑ Emphasize the importance of prenatal and postnatal care



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AGING

- Provide information on co-morbidities, especially in menopausal women (i.e., diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease, aging, frailty, muscle mass, cognitive decline, cancer)
- Discuss the importance of being aware of other prescription medications and supplements, including herbals, and their potential interactions with HIV treatment (i.e., hormone replacement therapy, cholesterol-lowering medications, bisphosphonates)

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

- Emphasize that patients can live a healthy life despite an HIV diagnosis
- Describe and assess signs of depression; provide referrals to specialists, if needed
- Explain that test results are confidential and disclosure is optional
- Discuss benefits, risks and potential approaches for HIV status disclosure
- Explain negative impact of physical/emotional abuse and violence
- Assess risk of abuse or violence and refer to appropriate services
- Refer patients to local available resources

See Us: Women Take a Stand on HIV is a global awareness campaign focused on helping to address the unique challenges faced by women living with HIV. It seeks to encourage women living with HIV to get out of the shadows, build a sense of community and, ultimately, have a voice.

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For more information: SeeUs@IAPAC.org