

How can VA health care providers help HIV+ patients who are resistant to practicing risk reduction behaviors?

- ♦ Assess why risky behaviors may be continuing. Some reasons may include intoxication, unavailability of condoms, lack of access to clean needles, domestic violence, depression, mental illness or disinhibition, hopelessness, homelessness, and knowledge or skill deficits that prevent negotiation of safer sex. Make referrals, when appropriate, to VA and non-VA services that can address these issues.
- ♦ Assess the patient's willingness to change their behaviors using techniques such as motivational interviewing and the stages of change model

For additional information on HIV prevention available through the VA:

visit

<http://vhaaidsinfo.cio.med.va.gov/aidsservice/>

contact the VA Depot and request copies of

The VA HIV Prevention Handbook:
A Guide for Clinicians

(Stock #P95644)

contact

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PREVENTION FOR HIV+ PATIENTS



**Information for
VA Health Care Providers on
Prevention Activities
for Individuals with HIV**



As people with HIV are feeling better and living longer, HIV prevention has become an even more important part of chronic illness management. A greater quality of life and greater life expectancy for someone with HIV can mean increased relationships and sexual activity and in some instances, a return to substance-use activities. For these and other reasons, it is critical to engage HIV+ individuals in secondary prevention efforts.

What is secondary HIV prevention?

It consists of prevention activities directed towards people who are HIV+. It is sometimes referred to as prevention for positives. Secondary prevention differs from primary prevention, which focuses people who are not HIV infected.

What are the goals of secondary HIV prevention?

- ♦ To make sure people who are HIV+ do not transmit the virus to others
- ♦ To make sure people who are HIV+ remain healthy over time
- ♦ To prevent re-infection of people who are HIV+

Who in VA medical centers, clinics and Vet Centers can conduct secondary HIV prevention activities?

- ♦ Counselors in Vet Centers
- ♦ Nurse practitioners
- ♦ Nurses
- ♦ Physician assistants
- ♦ Physicians
- ♦ Psychiatrists
- ♦ Psychologists
- ♦ Social workers
- ♦ Substance abuse treatment providers
- ♦ Domiciliary counselors and staff
- ♦ Other health care providers

Why should VA health care providers practice secondary HIV prevention activities with their HIV+ patients?

- ♦ VA is the largest single provider of HIV care in the United States. In 1999, VA treated approximately 19,000 HIV+ veterans.
- ♦ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that in the United States, 800,000-900,000 individuals are living with HIV and of these individuals, approximately 300,000 may not know they are HIV+.
- ♦ Secondary HIV prevention activities can help prevent disease transmission, reinfection and resistance.
- ♦ Secondary HIV prevention activities can help increase the life expectancy and quality of life for HIV+ individuals.



What are secondary HIV prevention activities that can take place in VA health care settings?

- ♦ Writing prescriptions for condoms for people who are HIV+ (male and female condoms are listed on the VHA National Formulary)
- ♦ Providing education on sexual behavior changes and safer sex practices
- ♦ Supporting medication adherence efforts
- ♦ Screening for substance abuse (drugs and alcohol) and when appropriate, referring patients to substance abuse treatment programs
- ♦ Providing information on high-risk substance abuse activities and harm-reduction techniques
- ♦ Providing mental health referrals to help with the diagnosis and treatment of conditions that affect patients' ability to adhere to medications and risk reduction practices, such as depression, PTSD, mania, anxiety disorders, psychosis, personality disorders, social skills deficits, or chronic stressors such as domestic violence
- ♦ Providing referrals to counselors or social workers who can help counsel patients on how to negotiate safer sex with a partner and/or disclose their HIV status
- ♦ Discussing the altruistic dimension of contributing to the health of one's family, friends and community by adopting safe behaviors
- ♦ Screening for STDs-the presence of STDs may indicate unprotected sexual activity. The treatment of STDs can protect against transmission of HIV.
- ♦ Providing HIV testing and counseling referrals for partners of patients who are HIV+
- ♦ Providing ongoing risk assessment as patients' sexual and substance-use behaviors and their risk for transmission may change over time