

# Guide to Wellness







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#### HIV Basics

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## Important Phone Numbers

For all phone calls, please spell your last name and include a patient identifier (i.e. social security number, Medical Record Number, or Date of Birth). Please notify the Nurse if he or she is allowed to leave a detailed message on voice mail.

## Refill/Appointment calls:

1. Call (216) 778-8305
2. Press 1 for Nurse or Refill
3. Press 1 again for Refill
4. Press 2 for appointments

Please allow up to two business days for refills.

For narcotic refills patient will be called when script is ready.

## Lab result calls:

1. Call (216) 778-8305
2. Press 1 for Nurse and then follow prompts.

Please allow up to three business days for response.

## Nurse Advice:

1. Call (216) 778-8305
2. Press 1 for Nurse and then follow prompts.

Please leave detailed message of symptoms, including when symptoms started.

## Social Work Office:

(216) 778-5551

## Compass Services:

(216) 778-4051

# Newly Diagnosed With HIV? At MetroHealth, we're here to help.

Finding out that you have a serious, chronic illness is a life-changing experience. It can be frightening, upsetting, and make you feel like nothing is in your control. It is normal to take a few days to adjust to the reality of the diagnosis. Talk to someone who you know will love you no matter what for support. If there's nobody in your personal life you can talk to, call us. We'll support you. Compass Services is a special program offered exclusively at MetroHealth for people living with HIV/AIDS. For more information call (216) 778-4051.

There are things you can do to take control of your health. MetroHealth can help you through the steps. Please take time to read through this workbook and be sure to ask your providers any questions you may have.

## Making an appointment with an Infectious Disease (ID) Physician\*

For a **new patient appointment** at MetroHealth's Infectious Disease (ID) clinic, call (216) 778-2053 from 8:30 pm - 4:30 pm.

After you are established in the ID clinic you should plan to see your doctor every 3 to 6 months.

**If you would like to provide comments about your experience as a patient at MetroHealth, please call Patient Ombudsman at (216) 778-5800.**

*\*Specialists who treat people with HIV are called Infectious Disease Physicians.*

## Bring to Every Appointment with your HIV Doctor:

- A list of all prescribed medications, over-the-counter medications, and herbal supplements you are currently taking.
- A list of questions you may have for your doctor.
- A list of any symptoms you are having to discuss with your doctor.
- A photo ID.
- Documents for Ryan White eligibility (see p. 4).

## Directions to MetroHealth

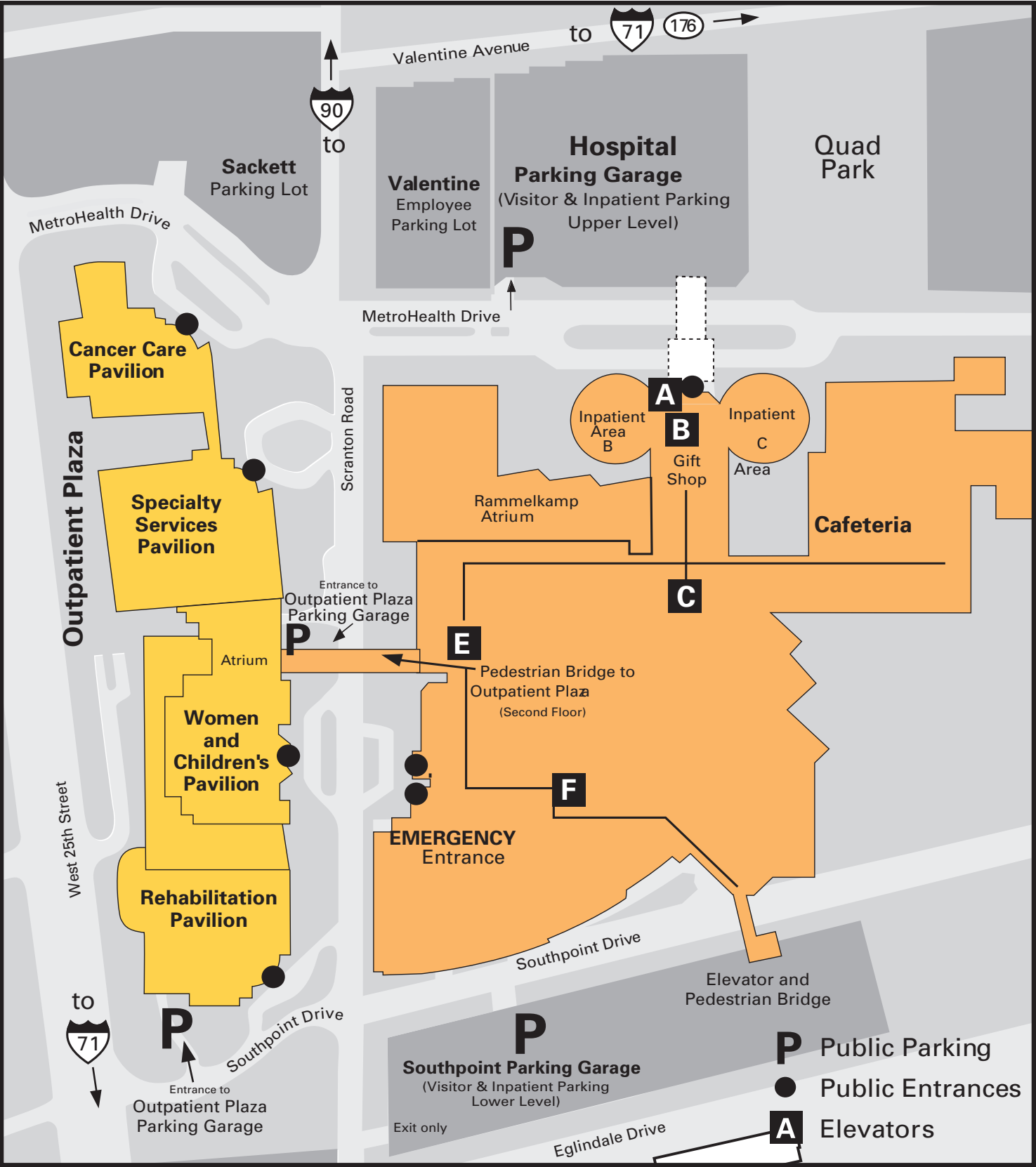
Infectious Disease physicians see patients in a few different locations at the main hospital. Check with the scheduler to verify where you will be seen for your appointment.

MetroHealth Medical Center, Main Campus, is located at 2500 MetroHealth Drive, Cleveland Ohio, 44109. MetroHealth is easily reached via the following RTA routes: 81 (Scranton and MetroHealth Drive), 20, 20A, 20B, 21X (rush hour service) and 35 (W. 25 and MetroHealth Drive).

## Metro Van

Call (216) 778-5258 at least 48 hours in advance to schedule your ride. This is available in certain zip codes only. Check for availability in your area. You **MUST** know your medical record number (found on the blue paper your physician gives you when you leave the clinic), date and time of your appointment when calling to schedule.

# Map of MetroHealth Medical Center



## Parking

Parking is available under the outpatient pavilion clinics, on the surface lot accessible via MetroHealth Drive, and in the visitor's garage. Parking can be validated for individuals meeting certain income guidelines. Bring your parking stub in and ask to speak to the social worker in clinic.



[metrohealth.org/mychart](http://metrohealth.org/mychart)






MyChart offers patients personalized and secure on-line access to portions of their medical records. It enables you to securely use the Internet to help manage and receive information about your health and to communicate with your health care team. With MyChart, you can:

- Request and cancel medical appointments.
- View your health summary and histories.
- View test results.
- Request prescription renewals.
- Communicate electronically and securely with your medical care team.
- Access health information

If you have questions, you can email [mychart@metrohealth.org](mailto:mychart@metrohealth.org) or call (216) 778-8801

Monday – Friday, 8 am - 5 pm  
to talk to our MyChart staff.

**Remember, MyChart is NOT to be used for urgent needs. For medical emergencies, dial 911.**

	<b>Schedule, request and cancel appointments</b>
	<b>View test results</b>
	<b>Request prescription renewals</b>
	<b>Email your healthcare team with questions</b>
	<b>Access through mobile app</b>

## Medication Refills, Lab Results & Asking Health Questions

It's important to make sure you always have enough of your medications and to make sure to never run out. Understanding how to get your medications from the pharmacy will help make sure you always have what you need. Ask your social worker, nurse or doctor if you have any questions about how to get your medication.

For medication refills, questions about your medications, lab results, or other health concerns, call your nurse or the Nurse Triage Line at (216) 778-8305. Please leave a detailed message with all of the information your nurse might need in order to help you.

For **Medication Refill Requests** be sure to include the following information in your message:

- Your name
- Your telephone number
- The medication you need
- The name and telephone number of your pharmacy

*\* Remember that the best time to make a medication refill request is during your regular doctor's visit.*

Medication refills are processed in 2 business days. Make sure you make a refill request BEFORE you run out of your medication.

Keep in mind that you cannot put in a medication refill request over weekends, holidays, and after the clinic is closed. It's a good idea to call your pharmacy to make sure your medication is ready before going to pick it up.

### Laboratory/Blood Work

- Your doctor will usually ask you to come in for a blood draw **two weeks before** your next appointment so that you can discuss the results during that visit.
- You do not need any paperwork to go to the lab. However, leave a message for your nurse two days prior to when you come into the lab to make sure your orders are in the computer.
- The laboratory is generally open Monday-Friday from 7 am to 5:45 pm.
- CD4 counts are not done on Fridays after 11 am.

### Case Management

MetroHealth uses a team-based approach in our HIV clinic. You will be seen by the same physician, nurse, and social worker each time you visit us.

**Social workers** can provide case management services to those who need extra support and help accessing resources in the community for things like food, housing, medication and transportation assistance. Social workers can also help you with insurance, emotional problems/support, and adjusting to your medical condition.

**If you need help with any of the above services, contact your social worker or the Social Work Office at (216) 778-5551. The office is open Monday-Friday 8:30 am-5 pm.**

# Insurance

If you are currently uninsured, a social worker can help you determine if you are eligible to enroll in Medicaid or Medicare. If you are over the income guidelines, a social worker can help you navigate the Health Insurance Marketplace.

If you currently have insurance, you will not be dropped from that program due to your diagnosis.

If your insurance does not cover the full expenses of your care, and you can't afford premiums or co-pays, do not worry. There are other programs such as Ryan White Part A and Ohio HIV Drug Assistance Program (OHDAP) that will help cover the cost of your HIV care, if you financially qualify. **Please contact your social worker for more information.**

## Ryan White Part A

The Ryan White Part A program is federally funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. It provides HIV-related services for those who:

- Live in the Cleveland TGA (Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Lake, Geauga, Lorain and Medina counties)
- Meet the program's income guidelines
- Are uninsured or underinsured

### Ryan White Part A services include:

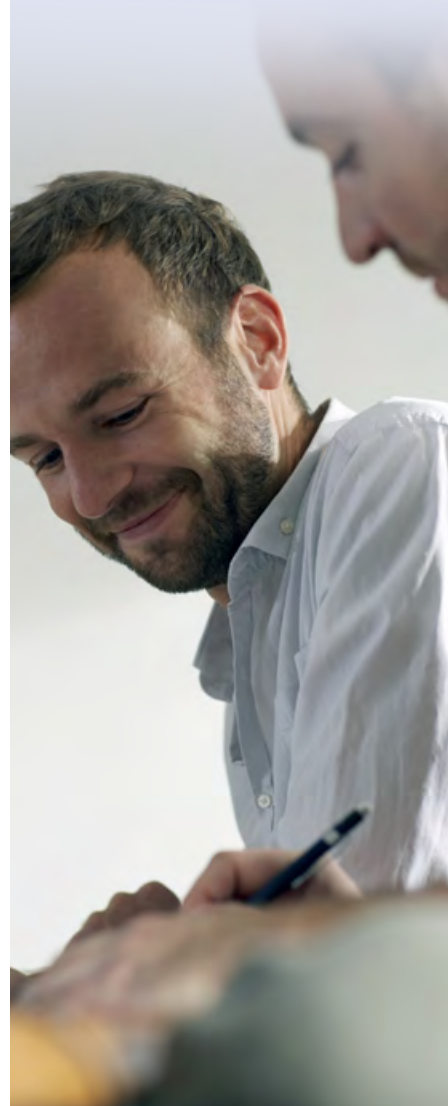
- Medical Case Management
- Emergency Pharmaceutical Assistance
- Primary Medical Care
- Early Intervention Services
- Oral Health Services
- Food Bank / Home Delivered Meals
- Home Health Care
- Hospice
- Housing
- Medical Nutrition Therapy
- Medical Transportation
- Mental Health Services
- Legal Services
- Outreach
- Psychosocial Support
- Substance Abuse Treatment

To see if you are eligible/continue to be eligible for Ryan White services, you'll need to bring the following items with you to your appointment with your HIV doctor.

- A Photo ID
- Proof of Cleveland TGA Residency (Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Lake, Geauga, Lorain and Medina counties)
- Proof of Income (if applicable)
- Proof of insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid (if applicable)

### Bring every 6 months for the Ryan White Part A program:

- Residency Verification, such as a utility bill or lease in your name with your current address if different from your photo ID.
- Current health insurance information.
- Last two pay stubs or most recent award letter for SSI/SSDI or other benefit.





## Compass Services

Compass Services at MetroHealth is a special program for people living with HIV/AIDS that offers the following:

- **Support groups** – Research shows that regular attendance at support groups can improve the sense of well-being and quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. Compass Services offers several support groups that help people with the social, emotional, health and wellness aspects of having HIV/AIDS. Learn more at [metrohealth.org/compassservices](http://metrohealth.org/compassservices)
- **Peer Navigation** – People living with HIV/AIDS are uniquely qualified to understand, encourage and support each other. Compass Services at MetroHealth's Peer Navigation program links people living with HIV to trained Peer Navigators for one-on-one support.
- Are you on **Facebook**? Compass Services has a secret Facebook group only for HIV positive people. This private group allows everyone to connect, support and educate each other. Daily posts about various and interesting topics in HIV are provided.



- **Counseling** – Compass Services offers counseling and education for those newly diagnosed with HIV.

For more information about Compass Services call (216) 778-4051.

## Finding Support

Turning to people who you trust is a great source of support. Telling someone your HIV status is not always easy, but their help and support can mean a lot. Many people find that it's easier to talk with another person who is living with HIV, as they can provide knowledge and offer support from their personal experiences.

## HIV Websites and Community Resources

Good, science-based websites to learn more about HIV:

[www.thebody.com](http://www.thebody.com), [www.aidsinfonet.org](http://www.aidsinfonet.org), [www.projectinform.org](http://www.projectinform.org)

There are many additional community resources in Cuyahoga County, these include:

AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland .....	(216) 357-3131 <a href="http://www.aidstaskforce.org">www.aidstaskforce.org</a>
Alcoholics Anonymous Cleveland Central Office .....	1-800-835-1935 • <a href="http://www.aacleve.org">www.aacleve.org</a>
Centers for Family and Children.....	(216) 623-1445 • <a href="http://www.c4fc.org">www.c4fc.org</a>
Cuyahoga County Employment & Family Services .....	(216) 987-7000 <a href="http://www.employment.cuyahogacounty.us">www.employment.cuyahogacounty.us</a>
First Call for Help .....	211 or (216) 436-2000 • <a href="http://www.211cleveland.org">www.211cleveland.org</a>
Front Line Services.....	(216) 623-6888 • <a href="http://www.mhs-inc.org">www.mhs-inc.org</a>
Hispanic Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Project (HUMADAOP).....	(216) 459-1222
LGBT Community Center .....	(216) 651-5428 • <a href="http://www.lgbtcleveland.org">www.lgbtcleveland.org</a>
Medicaid Expansion.....	<a href="http://benefits.ohio.gov">benefits.ohio.gov</a>
Mobile Crisis Unit (for mental health emergencies) .....	(216) 623-6888
Ohio Department of Health (HIV care services, OHDAP and HIPP programs).....	1-800-777-4775
Ohio HIV/AIDS/STD Hotline.....	1-800-332-2437 • <a href="http://www.preventhivstdohio.net">www.preventhivstdohio.net</a>
Positive Health Project (for injection drug users) .....	(212) 465-8304 <a href="http://www.positivehealthproject.org">www.positivehealthproject.org</a>
Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center (Latino Focused).....	(216) 651-8236 <a href="http://www.nuevaluzurc.org/services/proyecto-luz">www.nuevaluzurc.org/services/proyecto-luz</a>
Recovery Resources .....	(216) 431-4131
Social Security Administration .....	1-800-772-1213
Suicide Prevention National Lifeline .....	1-800-273-TALK <a href="http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org">www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org</a>
Ursuline Piazza .....	(216) 634-7436 • <a href="http://www.UrsulinePiazza.org">www.UrsulinePiazza.org</a>

## Mental Health Counseling

For those struggling with mental illness in addition to HIV/AIDS, MetroHealth, in collaboration with the Ryan White Part A program, offers individual and group mental health counseling, regardless of insurance status.

Please call (216) 778-5974 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

# HIV Basics

## What is HIV?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV attacks your immune system, specifically your important white blood cells called CD4 or T-cells. HIV kills your T-cells and uses them to make copies of itself. The more HIV virus in your body, the less T-cells you have to keep you healthy.

Your immune system works to keep you healthy, but as your T-cells are destroyed by HIV, your immune system loses its ability to fight off illness and you can become sick. Diseases you get from a weakened immune system are called opportunistic infections.

## What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is the advanced stage of HIV, when a person has very few T-cells, and therefore a very weak immune system. People whose HIV has progressed to AIDS are very likely to get opportunistic infections and become very sick.

## Viral load/CD4 count

You can determine the stage of your HIV infection based on your viral load and CD4 (T-cell) count. It is important to have regular blood work so that you and your physician are always aware of your CD4 count and viral load. This will help you make informed decisions about treatment.

**CD4 count** is the amount of CD4 cells in a sample of blood. On average, healthy CD4 counts are between 500-1500. Once a person's CD4 count has dropped below 200, HIV has progressed to AIDS.

When your CD4 count drops below 200 you will need medications to help prevent serious opportunistic infections. Your doctor will advise you on the course of treatment.

**Viral load** is the amount of virus in a sample of blood. Your viral load may be as high as over a million or as low as undetectable. (Undetectable results are achieved from medication treatment. Having an undetectable viral load does NOT mean you are cured.) A lower viral load usually means slower damage to your immune system.

Taking your medication reduces the HIV level in your blood. Once your HIV levels become "undetectable" it is much less likely that the virus will be transmitted to a partner. (CDC, 2003)

## How to reduce the risk of spreading HIV to others in sexual relationships:

Abstaining from sex or using a condom is the best way to prevent the spread of HIV. However, if you are not able to use those methods, there are still ways to reduce the risk of spreading HIV to others:

- Take your HIV medication and obtain an undetectable viral load.

The PARTNER study released results of a two-year study in March 2014 that followed 1,100 serodiscordant couples (one partner is HIV+ and the other is HIV-). In this study the HIV+ partner had to have an undetectable viral load and the couple engaged in sex without condoms at least some of the time. **Out of the 1,100 couples, no HIV- partner was infected over the two years.** When you take your HIV medications as prescribed, eventually your viral load will become so low, it will be "undetectable" on tests. While you still have HIV, your chances of spreading to your partner while "undetectable" are very, very low.

- Avoid contact with semen and vaginal fluids. If you are a man, withdraw or "pull out" before ejaculation (in oral, anal, and vaginal sex)

## How is HIV spread?

**HIV is spread through four bodily fluids:**

- Blood
- Semen (cum)
- Vaginal fluid
- Breast milk

**HIV is spread to others by:**

- Unprotected sex (vaginal, anal, or oral sex) with someone who is infected
- Sharing needles
- An infected mother in pregnancy, childbirth or by breastfeeding her infant.

**You CANNOT get HIV from:**

- Saliva
- Tears
- Sweat
- Hugging
- Kissing
- Dancing
- Sharing food or drinks
- Using a bathroom
- Getting a massage

**To prevent spreading HIV to others:**

- Practice safe sex!
  - ALWAYS use a latex condom
  - Use a new condom each and every time you have sex.
- Use only a water-based lube (like KY jelly or Astroglide). Do not use oil-base lubricants (like Vaseline or baby oil) as these will cause a condom to break.
- If you use drugs, never share a needle or your works.
- If you have a baby, do not breast-feed. Bottle-feed with formula instead.







## Ohio Law “Disclose before Exposure”

Sharing your HIV status is a personal choice, except in your sexual relationships. Ohio law requires that you tell your HIV+ status before engaging in any sexual relationship (oral, anal, vagina). It is a second-degree felony in Ohio to have sexual contact with someone without telling them your HIV+ status, regardless if your partner becomes HIV+ or not.



## More Risk Reduction Tips

- Choose oral sex instead of anal or vaginal sex
- Do not brush teeth right before or after oral sex. Brushing can make tiny cuts on your gums which can allow the virus to enter into the blood stream.
- Use a water-based lubricant
- Have sex less frequently and/or with fewer partners
- Partners who are HIV negative can take PrEP. PrEP is short for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. It is an HIV prevention method where people who do not have HIV take a daily pill to reduce their risk of becoming infected. When used consistently, PrEP has been shown to reduce the risk of HIV infection among adult men and women at very high risk for HIV infection. (CDC, 2013). Ask your doctor about PrEP.

## Disclosure Tips

There is no one best way to tell someone that you are HIV positive, just as there is no sure way to gauge how someone will react to your news. Take some time to think about who you’d like to disclose to. Some people living with HIV/AIDS decide to tell only one person, while others are open about their status to everyone. Remember, besides sexual partners who you must always tell, who you tell and how many people you tell is completely up to you.

### Telling others may be a positive experience because:

- You can get love and support to help you deal with your health
- You don’t have to hide your HIV status
- You can keep close friends and family informed about issues that are important to you
- You can educate others about HIV
- You can get the most appropriate health care
- You can reduce the risk of transmitting it to others
- In Ohio, you can be charged with felonious assault for not telling a sexual partner you are HIV+ before engaging in sex

### Telling others may be a negative experience because:

- People may discriminate against you because of your status
- Some find it hard to accept your status and need time to overcome their fears or misconceptions
- You may be rejected in dating or social situations

Here are some tips for sharing your status to friends, family members, and potential partners/sexual relationships:

1. Talk to someone who is HIV+ and ask them how they handled disclosure
2. Remember that telling someone your status will have an effect on them. Some people may immediately accept your diagnosis, while others may react negatively or need time. It may be helpful to provide them with information on HIV, as the more they know about HIV, the more accepting and supportive they likely will be.
3. If the person you are telling is someone you’ve had sex or shared needles with, you need to tell the person that they need to get an HIV test. If you can’t or do not want to tell that partner, there are resources to help you. The Cleveland Department of Public Health has a partner notification service. Call (216) 664-7099 for more information.

# Medication Basics

## Medication Options

Starting antiretroviral medications is an important step in managing your HIV infection. The current recommendation suggests you start medication right away, before you experience any symptoms. However, the best time to begin medication is based on a variety of factors such as:

- Your T-cell count and viral load
- Your readiness to commit to taking medicine every day
- Other health concerns or medical conditions

HIV treatment works by keeping the virus from making more copies of itself, which in turn raises your T-cell count and re-builds your immune system. People who stick to their HIV treatment can expect to live a long and healthy life. It also helps lower the risk of spreading HIV to others. For these reasons, treatment is recommended before you start experiencing symptoms.

It is important that you follow your doctor's guidance in taking your medication daily. If you have any questions, make sure to always ask your doctor or nurse.

Your doctor will check your viral load about one month after starting treatment, to make sure the medicine is working. After that, your viral load and CD4 count will be checked every 3 to 4 months.

Your doctor will usually ask you to come in for a blood draw two weeks before your next appointment so that you can discuss the results during that visit.

Make sure to go two weeks before your doctor's appointment, as that allows time for your results to come in. You do not need an appointment to get a blood draw, but you should call ahead to make sure that your blood draw orders are current.

## Medication Resistance

Once you start HIV treatment, the goal is to keep the HIV in your body from making copies of itself. Since the HIV virus replicates so quickly, it often makes a lot of genetic mistakes. If one of those genetic mistakes begins to make copies of itself, then the HIV virus has mutated. Medication Resistance occurs because the mutated HIV virus will not allow the HIV medications you are taking to stop the virus from replicating.

If HIV medication is not taken as prescribed (every day) then the HIV can still make copies of itself. The HIV virus can mutate and stop responding to your current HIV treatment. **This is why it is so important that you are fully committed to taking your HIV medicine every day once you begin treatment!**

## Side Effects

Your doctor will talk to you about possible side effects from your HIV medication. If you experience any side effects that you were not expecting, or you have side effects that make it difficult for you to take your medication properly, CALL your nurse or doctor right away. Do not wait until your next appointment.

- **Make sure to talk with your doctor before starting any new medicines, herbs, or vitamins.** Many supplements, such as St. John's Wart, can interact with your HIV medication.
- Keep track of any side-effects you may have so that you can discuss them with your doctor.
- Do not stop your HIV medications without talking to your doctor first.

## Medication Adherence Tips

Once you start medication, it is important that you stick with it. Here are some tips to make remembering to take your medication easier:

1. **Take your medicine at the same time every day** – using reminders on your phone makes it easy to remember that it's time to take your medication.
2. Taking your medicine during an activity you already do at roughly the same time each day can help you remember, for example you could take your medicine:
  - Before or after you brush your teeth at night
  - While making your morning coffee or breakfast
  - Before getting out of bed
  - When you get home from work/school
3. **Use pillboxes** – Make sure to use the kind that holds a week's worth. That way, you can keep track of which pills you've taken, and be aware if you've missed any doses.
4. **Attend a support group** – peers can help you deal with the stresses of taking a daily medication. They can also share their own tips and successes with you, to get you off to a good start with your medication.
5. If you are traveling away from home, even just for a day or two, always remember to **take extra medication with you.**
6. Make sure that a close family member or friend who knows your status knows how important it is for you to take your medicine and ask if they can help you remember.

## Common side effects of starting HIV medication are nausea and diarrhea (but they're usually temporary).

Here are some tips to help deal with these symptoms:

- Eat simple, bland foods such as pudding, eggs, mashed potatoes, applesauce, lean meats (such as baked chicken), bananas, and noodles.
- Eat slowly, small and more frequent meals.
- Drink plenty of clear liquids.
- Make sure to avoid: caffeine (soda, coffee, energy drinks), fried or fatty food, alcohol, and if advised by your doctor, dairy products
- If your nausea or diarrhea is severe, your doctor may be able to prescribe a medication to help.

- If you must stop taking your HIV medications, make sure to stop taking ALL of them, not some of them, until you can talk with your doctor.

Remember, if you stop taking your medications as prescribed by your doctor, resistance can develop, meaning that your medication will no longer work against the virus.

## Treatment Cascade

The HIV care continuum – sometimes also referred to as the HIV treatment cascade – is a model that is used by Federal, state and local agencies to identify issues and opportunities related to improving the delivery of services to people living with HIV across the entire continuum of care.

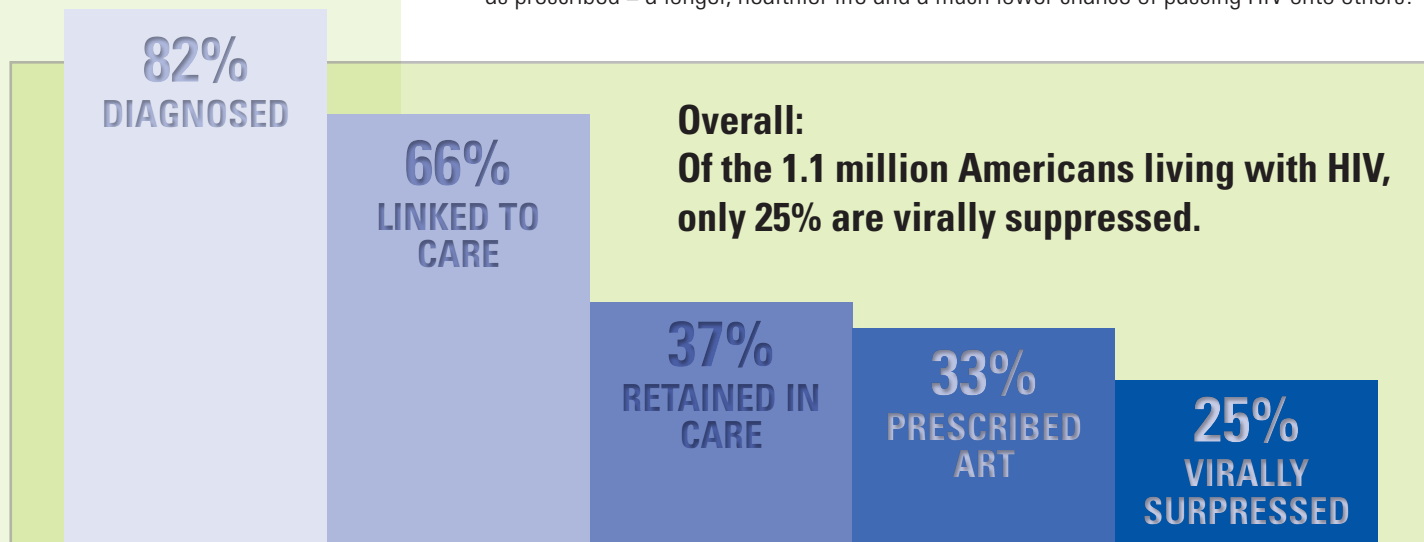
This continuum has five main “steps” or stages:

- **HIV Diagnosis** – The HIV care continuum begins with a diagnosis of HIV infection. The only way to know for sure that you are infected with the HIV virus is to get an HIV test. People who don't know they are infected are not accessing the care and treatment they need to stay healthy. They can also unknowingly pass the virus on to others.
- **Getting linked to care** – Once you know you are infected with the HIV virus, it is important to be connected to an HIV healthcare provider who can offer you treatment and counseling to help you stay as healthy as possible and prevent passing HIV on to others.
- **Staying in care** – Because there is no cure for HIV at this time, treatment is a lifelong process. To stay healthy, you need to receive regular HIV medical care. \*  
**You must see the doctor and have blood work at least twice a year to be considered “in care.”**
- **Getting antiretroviral therapy** – Antiretrovirals are drugs that are used to prevent HIV from making more copies of itself. Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is the recommended treatment for HIV infection. It involves using a combination of three or more antiretroviral drugs from at least two different HIV drug classes every day to control the virus.
- **Achieving a low amount of HIV virus in your body** – By taking ART regularly, you can achieve viral suppression, meaning a very low level of HIV in your blood. You aren't cured. There is still some HIV in your body. But lowering the amount of virus in your body with medicines can keep you healthy, help you live longer, and greatly reduce your chances of passing HIV on to others.

(aids.gov, 2012)

## To summarize:

Staying in care + achieving a low amount of HIV virus in your blood by taking your HIV medicines as prescribed = a longer, healthier life and a much lower chance of passing HIV onto others!





# Wellness Basics

## Remember to plan ahead.

Do not wait to contact your nurse until Friday afternoon or the day before a holiday to ask about a symptom or request prescription refills.

## Healthy Lifestyle Choices

HIV medications suppress your HIV viral load, but your body must build back up t-cells on its own. A strong immune system helps fight infections, gives you energy, and helps repair damage. To make your immune system strong, you may need to think about healthy lifestyle changes. There are many things you can do to stay healthy and create a good environment in your body for building up t-cells.

## Reduce Stress

Did you know that stress weakens your immune system? Finding ways to lower your stress is key. Here are some tips to help lower your stress levels:

1. **Identify what is stressful for you** -- Different people feel stressed about different things. Make a list of the factors or reasons that cause you stress, and then work on gaining control over them so that they become easier to manage.
2. **Get organized** – After you've identified your stressors; create a plan to manage them. When people are under extreme stress, every task can seem overwhelming, but making sure to organize your life can help you feel in control. For example, simply setting reminders of when to take medication, putting appointments in a planner or on your phone, or scheduling regular times to exercise or meditate can really help you stay on top of things.
3. **Establish a Bedtime Routine** – It is very important to get enough rest and many people benefit from a routine before sleep. Try something you enjoy such as taking a bath or shower, drinking some herbal tea, and reading a book before bed. Do what helps you relax, but try to avoid bright screens from the TV or computer, as this may do the opposite of promoting sleep.
4. **Get Emotional Support** – Join a support group, talk to a close friend, or find an organization that promotes activities for persons living with HIV. Connect with others who have the understanding and compassion for what you're going through. Compass Services at MetroHealth has many opportunities to connect with others, call (216) 778-4051 for more information.

## Eat Well

A good diet will help you feel better, avoid complications, and stay healthy. The general principles of healthy eating are:

- Eat a lot of fruit and vegetables!
- Choose whole grains instead (i.e. whole wheat bread instead of white bread, multi-grain pasta instead of white pasta)
- Choose healthy fats like avocados, nuts, and olive oil
- Limit sugar, soda, and sweets
- Skip trans fat, which is most frequently found in fried food
- Drink plenty of water, at least 8 cups every day
- Avoid fad diets or diets that cater to immunity-boosting- they're hard to stick to and could be unhealthy and even dangerous for you.

Get help if you need it. These guidelines are good for most people with HIV, but if you're feeling sick, or having unwanted weight loss, see your doctor.

## What to do if...

### I have cold symptoms.

Start with over-the-counter cold and cough medications. If your condition worsens or if there is no improvement in a day or two, contact your nurse.

### I think I have the flu.

The flu is most commonly characterized by *body aches, high fevers and breathing problems*. Often times these symptoms come on quite suddenly and intensely. If you are experiencing these symptoms, contact your nurse, as Tamiflu can reduce the time of having the flu, but it needs to be taken at the start of symptoms.

Other viral infections that are usually not the flu are characterized by *vomiting, diarrhea and fever*.

### I am throwing up and/or having diarrhea.

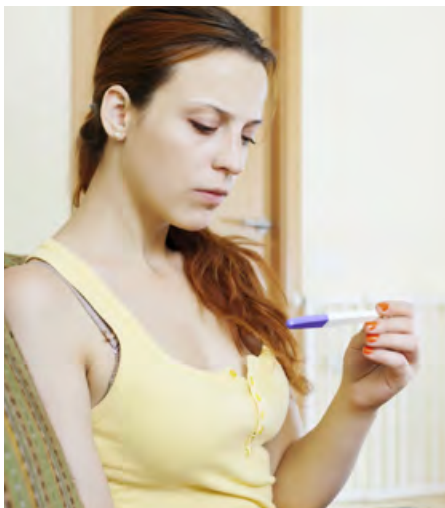
Try to drink clear liquids such as broth, tea, or Gatorade to stay hydrated. If symptoms last for more than a day, contact your nurse.

### I think I have a rash.

Dry, itchy skin is common in our NE Ohio climate. Over-the-counter skin lotions are the best first approach. If over-the-counter lotions don't help or if there are other symptoms, contact your nurse.

### I think I have an STI.

If you think you have been exposed to a sexually transmitted infection, call your nurse to get tested. This involves a blood test, a urine test or a swab. Be sure to tell your nurse if you were the receptive partner for anal or oral sex as this requires an oral or anal swab. Sometimes there are no symptoms with STIs, so it is better to get tested if you think you might have picked something up.



## HIV in Pregnancy

If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant, there are steps you can take to make sure you do not pass HIV onto your baby.

An HIV positive mother can spread HIV to her child in three ways:

1. During pregnancy
2. During childbirth
3. By breastfeeding

However, with HIV medications for you and your baby, good prenatal care, and a delivery plan, the transmission rate from mom to baby is very low. **In the United States, if these protocols are followed, the transmission rate is only 1-2%.**

Talk to your doctor to get the information you need to make sure you have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.



## Be Active

If you don't already exercise, now is the time to begin. Staying in shape not only helps many people cope with stress and depression but with other HIV-related health issues such as nerve pain and diabetes. Data suggests that the more physically active you are, the better you'll be able to keep your viral load under control.

If you haven't exercised before, you should start off slowly and consult your doctor before you begin.

**Here are some tips to make sure you exercise safely and effectively:**

- If you've never exercised, start off slowly. Exercise once or twice a week for five to ten minutes. Walking and stationary cycling are probably the best to begin with. If five to ten minutes feels too easy, you should try to exercise two or three times a week for 15 – 20 minutes at a time.
- Once you can manage this, build up to more frequent and longer workouts until you are able to do 40 minutes, four times per week.
- Remember to warm up and cool down before each exercise by starting slow and stretching.
- Try to do different things to keep it exciting: walk the dog, do yoga, go for a swim, try a dance-themed class, go for a bike ride, etc. Just make sure you get up and move!

## Smoking and HIV

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. However, smoking is even more of a concern for those who are HIV positive, as it has many additional negative health effects.

**Smokers with HIV:**

- Are at higher risk than non-smokers with HIV of developing lung cancer, head and neck cancers, cervical and anal cancers, and other cancers;
- Are more likely than non-smokers with HIV to develop bacterial pneumonia and heart disease;
- Are more likely than non-smokers with HIV to develop two conditions that affect the mouth: oral candidiasis (thrush) and oral hairy leukoplakia
- Have a poorer response to antiretroviral therapy.

*(aids.gov, 2013)*

## Stop Smoking with the Freedom from Smoking Program at MetroHealth

The American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking® Program is offered at MetroHealth Medical Center, our satellite clinics, and at community centers such as libraries. This 8-session program provides the skills, tools, and support needed to successfully stop smoking. The classes are offered in English.

Freedom From Smoking provides the kind of motivation, encouragement and support needed to stop smoking for good. A quit-smoking counselor, trained by the American Lung Association, teaches you how to identify your addiction to nicotine and what it takes to overcome the cravings. Group sessions highlight how to keep from relapsing and effective relaxation and stress reduction techniques.

Classes are free and open to all adults age 18 years of age and older. Nicotine replacement products (NRT) are available for class participants and are free to those who qualify. Class schedules vary by time and location throughout the MetroHealth System.

For more information about the program, or to register for a class, call **(216) 778-7503**.

## Limit Alcohol and Avoid Street Drugs

While it is safe to occasionally drink alcohol in moderation while taking HIV medication, alcohol in large amounts can have negative effects on your immune system. Since HIV already weakens your immune system, heavy use of alcohol greatly hurts your overall health. Large amounts of alcohol can damage the liver. Since the liver plays a vital role in processing medications, it is best to protect your liver as much as possible by limiting alcohol consumption.

You may notice that your body reacts differently to alcohol now. Many people notice the effects of alcohol much faster than before or that it takes much longer to recover from drinking alcohol. Listen to your body and pay attention to how you are feeling.

**It is important that you do not skip your HIV medication if you are drinking or plan to drink alcohol.** Always take your medication as prescribed. You should tell your doctor if you use alcohol, especially if you are drinking heavily, or if drinking alcohol interferes with your ability to take your HIV medication as prescribed. Although you may feel uncomfortable at first, your doctor will be able to share with you how the substances you are using affect your HIV drugs and your overall health. Your medical team will also be able to refer you for a Drug and Alcohol Assessment to determine if treatment is needed.

If you feel you have a drinking or drug problem, you can take steps today to get help. Your first step might be to see your doctor, contact your social worker, attend a 12-step group, or set a date in the near future to stop. While some people can stop on their own, others need medical help to manage the physical process of opiate and/or alcohol withdraw. It's a good idea to reach out for support regardless, and get a professional's guidance in the process.

## Do you have a drinking or drug use problem?

A good way to figure out if you should consider seeking help is by using **The CAGE Screening**.

Please answer the following questions:

1. Have you felt the need to **C**ut down on your drinking and/or drug use?
2. Do you feel **A**nnoyed by people complaining about your drinking and/or drug use?
3. Do you ever feel **G**uilty about your drinking and/or drug use?
4. Do you ever drink or use an **E**ye-opener in the morning to relieve shakes?

If you answered YES to two or more of the above questions, then you may have a drinking or drug use problem.

If you think you may have a problem with drugs or alcohol, you should do one of the following:

1. Talk to your social worker
2. Contact Cleveland's Alcoholic Anonymous  
Central Office: (216) 241-7387,  
[www.aacleve.org](http://www.aacleve.org)
3. Call the Cuyahoga ADAMHS Board  
for help getting alcohol/drug treatment:  
(216) 623-6888





# Health Maintenance Chart

## HIV Doctor appointment (at least 2 visits a year)

*Being in care means seeing your HIV doctor at least 2 times a year.*

Appt. Date	Appt. Date	Appt. Date	Appt. Date	Appt. Date	Appt. Date	Appt. Date	Appt. Date	Appt. Date	Appt. Date

### Vaccines

**Influenza:** Once a year


**Pevnar:** One time only


**PneumoVax** (after initial dose of Pevnar): Once every 5 years


**Tdap or Tetanus:**  
Once every 10 years

--

### Multidose Series Vaccines:

**HPV** (if 26 years old or younger)

--

**Hepatitis A** (if indicated)

--

**Hepatitis B** (if indicated)

--

### Vaccines for Traveling Outside of the US

Check with your physician several months before departure.

### Screens

#### Every 4 months

	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<b>Routine LABS</b>								
<b>CD4</b>								
<b>HIV Viral Load</b>								

#### Once a Year

	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<b>Kidney &amp; Liver Blood Count</b>								
<b>Urine Protein</b>								
<b>Syphilis</b>								
<b>Anal Pap</b>								

#### Start between 40-50 years old, then once a year

	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<b>Mammogram</b>								

#### Start at 50 years old, then once a year

	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<b>Colonoscopy</b>								

#### At least once a year, but every 6 months for optimal care

	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<b>Dentist</b>								

#### New sex partner or other risk factors

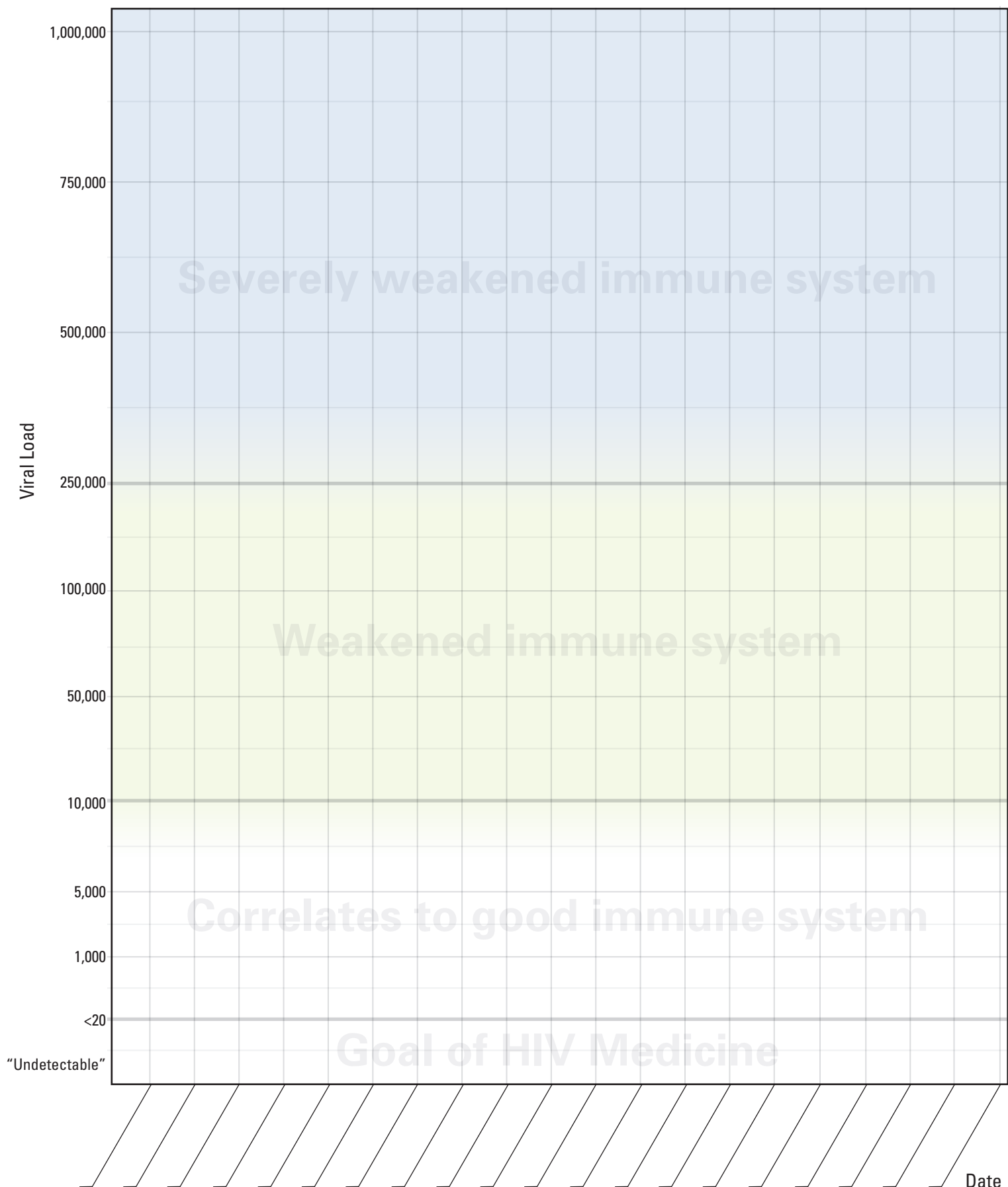
	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<b>STI – Gonorrhea and Chlamydia</b>								

**Just once**

**PPD (Tuberculosis)**

Date

# Viral Load Tracking Sheet



## My Clinic Information

My Medical Record Number:

My Doctor is:

My Nurse is:

Nurse Phone Number:

My Social Worker is:

Social Worker Phone Number:

My pharmacy is:

My pharmacy phone number:

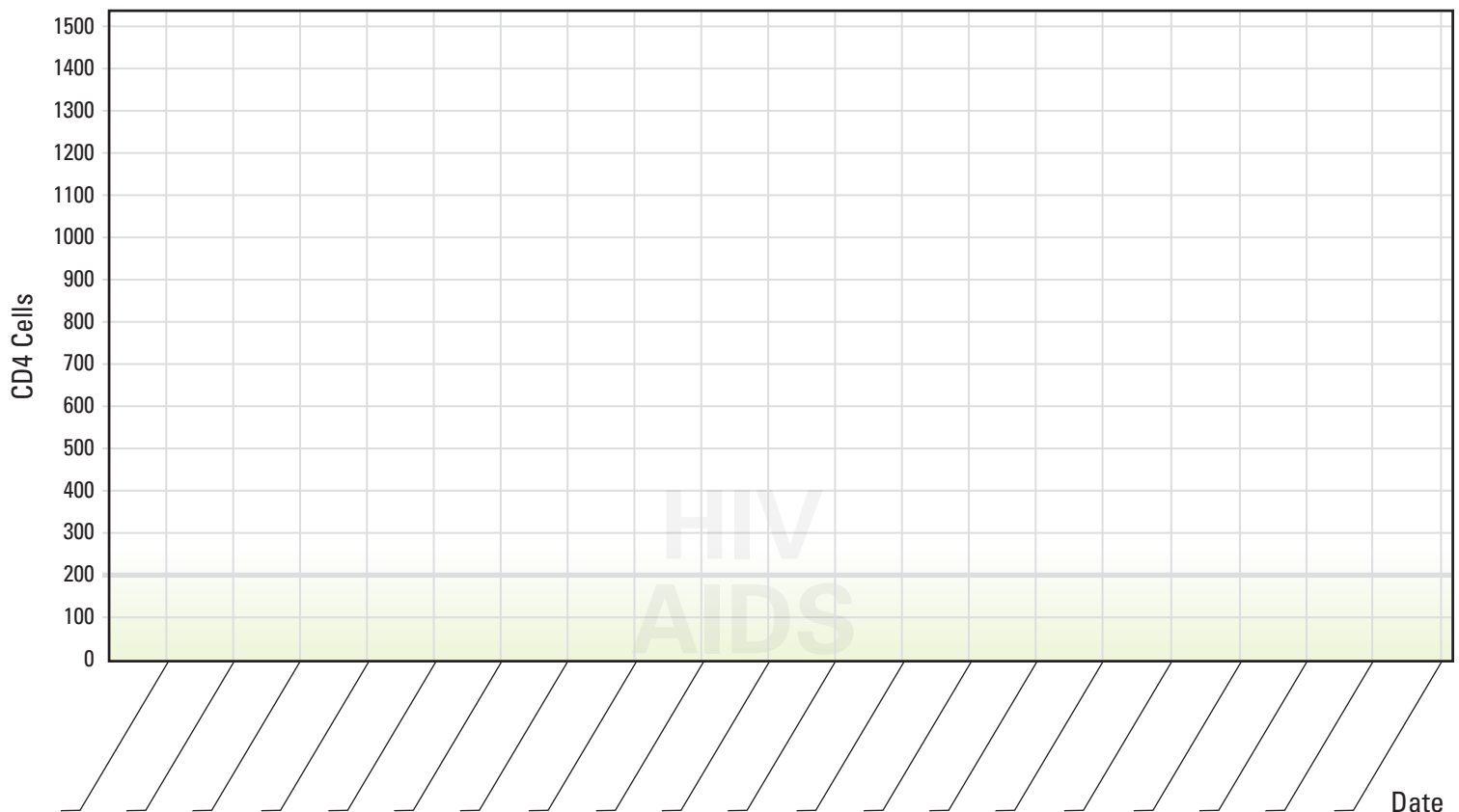
## Medication History

Current Medications	Instructions	Purpose

Past Medications	Instructions	Purpose

I'm allergic to:

## CD4 (T-Cell) Tracking







**MetroHealth**

2500 MetroHealth Drive  
Cleveland, OH 44109