HAVING FEARLESS CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

It takes courage to overcome that initial fear of having a truly open conversation with your healthcare provider. But sharing details about your health and lifestyle are important, and it’s what your healthcare provider wants to hear.

Whether it’s about your daily routine and weekend habits, information on other medical conditions, or previous treatment experience, it’s difficult for your healthcare provider to assess the right treatment path for you without knowing the full picture.

TALKING TO THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER: POSITIVELY FEARLESS CONVERSATION STARTERS

While you should feel comfortable sharing any concerns or questions that you have with your healthcare provider, the below conversation starters are designed to help you take charge of your health, bring those fearless conversations into the healthcare provider’s office and redefine what living with HIV means for you.

“I HAVE A HARD TIME TAKING MY MEDICATION EXACTLY HOW I’VE BEEN TOLD TO, SHOULD I CONSIDER CHANGING?”

Taking your medication exactly how you’ve been advised to (for example, at the same time every day) is important to help keep your HIV at an undetectable level. If you’re having trouble sticking with or are uncomfortable with your treatment regimen, consider discussing with your healthcare provider.

“IN THE PAST I’VE HAD …/I’M CURRENTLY DEALING WITH…”

Some medical problems may affect the way your healthcare provider will treat your condition. For example, if your body is fighting off other diseases, it may guide your HIV treatment. Have an open and real conversation with your healthcare provider.

“ON A DAILY BASIS I TAKE…”

Inform your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements. These may interact with your HIV medication, causing new side effects or affecting its ability to work. Some medicines cause the amount of HIV medicine in your body to become too low and not control your HIV.
“I’VE BEEN FEELING SICK/SOMETHING DOESN’T FEEL RIGHT”

Let your healthcare provider know if you think your medicine is making you feel sick or causing you to feel bad in any way. Your healthcare provider may be able to help remedy some of these effects and/or let you know if they are temporary.

“I DON’T UNDERSTAND WHAT THESE LAB TEST RESULTS MEAN”

Your lab test results are more than just numbers. They tell you and your healthcare provider how healthy you are and how well your medicine is working. Ask your healthcare provider to help you understand the results so you know where you stand.

“I’M PREGNANT/I’M CONSIDERING GETTING PREGNANT”

Your healthcare provider needs to know this for the health of both you and your baby. Together you can make decisions about HIV care before, during, and after your pregnancy. Medicines may have to be changed before and during pregnancy. After pregnancy, your healthcare provider will discuss what baby formula to use because HIV-positive women should NOT breastfeed. This is because HIV can be spread through breast milk, as well as through food that is pre-chewed by someone with HIV who may be experiencing mouth cuts or sores.

SOME QUESTIONS YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER MIGHT ASK YOU

In addition to opening up these conversations, you should also be prepared for the questions your healthcare provider might ask you when evaluating your current HIV treatment.

- How comfortable are you with your current HIV treatment?
- How often do you take your medication at the same time every day?
- How often do you forget to take your medication?
- How long has your current medication helped to keep your HIV undetectable?
- How good are you at sticking to your daily routine?
- What past medications have you taken/what is your medication history?
- What other medications are you currently taking?

By partnering with your healthcare provider and having these fearless conversations, you can work together to face every challenge, and celebrate every success. And don’t forget, they know that things can change, so keeping this open dialogue can help them guide you and understand any impact these changes may have along on your HIV journey.

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