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PLWHNT

PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV NORTHERN TERRITORY

LIFE STYLE

What works best for you to determine your health & wellbeing...

Produced by NTAHC's
Care & Support Program

Welcome to you're magazine created by and for people living with HIV, to inform, inspire, and connect.

CONTENTS

Living well with HIV today is more possible than ever.

I would be the first to admit that when I was first diagnosed with HIV, I didn't always find it easy to live a healthy lifestyle.
Balancing medication, work, relationships, and self-care often felt overwhelming.

At times, I struggled with choices around food, exercise, and even sleep, and it showed in how I felt physically and emotionally.

Over time, I learned that small, consistent changes made the biggest difference. Eating well gave me more energy, staying active helped my mood, and surrounding myself with supportive people reminded me I wasn't alone.

And keeping to my treatment plan gave me the foundation to rebuild my health and wellbeing.
Living with HIV is about more than just managing the virus, it's about living as well as you possibly can. For me, finding balance in my lifestyle has taken me time, but everyone is different.

You will find your own path to living well with HIV it will be an important choice that continues to make life not only healthier but also more meaningful.

Don't be too hard on yourself if you at times over indulge in some aspect of your life. You will strike a balance that works for you - living with HIV isn't alway easy but you can improve your life by making the choices that help.

We are not alone doing this, its a goal that most people are encouraged to achieve.

- Healthy eating – what and how often we eat.
- Physical activity – exercise and movement in daily life.
- Rest and sleep – how well we recharge our body and mind.
- Substance use – choices around alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.
- Relationships and social connections – support networks and community.
- Attitudes and coping strategies – how we handle stress and challenges.

Above are just a few things we all think about doing better - small steps can make a huge difference. regards Mark

Stigma, Discrimination, and Social Isolation

Always remember that living with HIV is more than just a medical diagnosis—it's an experience that touches every part of life: emotional, social, and psychological.

For many, stigma and discrimination create an invisible barrier that can prevent them from fully accepting their diagnosis. The fear of judgment, rejection, or misunderstanding can make someone feel isolated, ashamed, or hesitant to seek the support and care they need.

Yet, it's crucial to remember that HIV does not define who you are as a person. Your diagnosis is only one aspect of your life, not the totality of your identity.

Embracing this perspective allows individuals to reclaim their sense of self, pursue their goals, and nurture meaningful relationships without the weight of stigma holding them back.

Acknowledging the reality of living with HIV while refusing to be limited by it is a powerful act of self-respect and resilience.

It encourages people to focus on health, well-being, and personal growth, rather than fear and shame.

By challenging stigma and embracing life fully, individuals not only empower themselves but also help reshape society's understanding, showing that living with HIV can be met with dignity, strength, and hope.

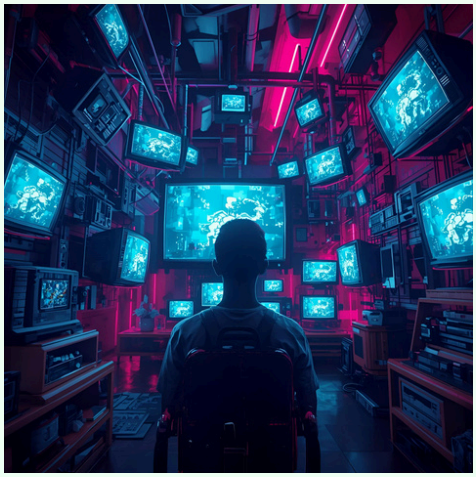
The videos links below from men and women living well with HIV.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqSB91rKqSU

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPiAF7KyzRw

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/AleoKIm8_Io

There is so much information out there be particular about what you would like to see.



Understanding your Blood results

Why it's Important for People Living with HIV to Understand Their Blood Results

Empowerment and Self-Management
Understanding blood results helps us living with HIV take an active role in our own health care.
It allows us to make informed decisions, ask meaningful questions, and feel more in control of our treatment journey.

Monitoring Treatment Effectiveness
Key results such as viral load and CD4 count indicate how well HIV treatment (ART) is working.
A consistently undetectable viral load shows the treatment is effective, and it also means HIV cannot be sexually transmitted (U=U – Undetectable = Untransmittable).

Early Detection of Changes or Issues
By understanding their blood results, individuals can identify when something isn't right — for example, if the viral load increases or CD4 count drops.
Recognising these changes early can lead to timely medical review or treatment adjustments.

Improved Communication with Health Providers
A good understanding of their blood results helps people living with HIV to have more productive discussions with doctors, nurses, and peer navigators.
It builds confidence and fosters a partnership approach to care.

Reducing Anxiety and Misinformation
Many people experience worry or confusion when they don't fully understand their results. Education about what each measure means helps reduce anxiety and dispel myths or misconceptions about HIV health.

Promoting Long-Term Health
Regular monitoring of blood results doesn't just track HIV — it also helps monitor general health indicators such as liver and kidney function, cholesterol, and other important markers affected by treatment or lifestyle.

Don't ever be afraid to ask questions about what is taking place at your appointment.
You are the best judge of how you are feeling.
If you not sure about something or have any concerns about your health and wellbeing share this with your HIV specialist or your GP.

Getting the right information in the right places

Why It's Important

Empowerment and Control:
Understanding HIV, treatment options, and how the virus affects the body helps people make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.
Knowledge builds confidence and reduces fear or misinformation.

Treatment Adherence:
Knowing how HIV medications (antiretroviral therapy, or ART) work and the importance of daily adherence supports successful viral suppression and long-term health.

Understanding Blood Results:
Learning what viral load and CD4 count mean helps individuals monitor how well treatment is working and discuss results effectively with healthcare providers.

Reducing Stigma and Isolation:
Reliable information helps people challenge myths and stigma about HIV, improving self-esteem and social inclusion within the community.

Protecting Others:
Understanding that an undetectable viral load means HIV cannot be sexually transmitted (U=U: Undetectable = Untransmittable) helps reduce anxiety and supports safer, stigma-free relationships.

Awareness of Rights and Supports:
Being informed about anti-discrimination laws, confidentiality rights, and available support services ensures people can advocate for themselves.

Staying Current:
HIV care evolves rapidly — new treatments, long-acting injectables, and research on cure or remission make it vital to access the latest verified information.

Trusted HIV Information Sources in Australia

National Resources

- NAPWHA (National Association of People with HIV Australia) Peer-led organisation providing information, advocacy, and community connection. www.napwha.org.au
- HIV.org.au
- Easy-to-read information on prevention, testing, treatment, and living well with HIV. www.hiv.org.au
- ASHM (Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine) Provides clinical and community resources about HIV treatment and care. www.ashm.org.au

State and Territory-Based Peer Organisations

- Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council (NTAHC) Peer navigation, care and support services, education, and community programs. www.ntahc.org.au
- Clinic 34 (Darwin & Alice Springs) Specialist HIV and sexual health clinic providing confidential testing, treatment, and medical care. Darwin: (08) 8999 2678 | Alice Springs: (08) 8951 7540

Other State Organisations

- Positive Life NSW – www.positivelife.org.au
- Living Positive Victoria – www.livingpositivevictoria.org.au
- Queensland Positive People – www.qpp.org.au
- Positive Life SA – www.hivsa.org.au
- WAAC (WA AIDS Council) – www.waac.com.au
- Tasmania https://positivelivestasmania.org.au/

Disclosure

Why is it one of the most difficult things you may need to do?

Finding Strength in Sharing: Navigating HIV Disclosure with Courage and Care
For many people living with HIV, deciding whether to tell family, friends, or partners about their status can be one of the hardest choices they face.
It's a deeply personal decision shaped by culture, beliefs, safety, and the fear of how others might react. Yet, when disclosure happens in a supportive environment, it can also be one of the most empowering steps toward living freely and authentically.

Why Disclosure Can Be So Difficult
Disclosing an HIV status is not simply about sharing a medical condition — it touches on identity, relationships, and how we are seen by others. Many people fear being judged, rejected, or treated differently.

Stigma and misinformation about HIV, though improving over time, still exist in some communities, creating anxiety and hesitation.
Cultural values and family expectations can also make disclosure more complex. In some cultures, topics around sex, health, or illness are private and rarely discussed. For others, there may be concerns about "bringing shame" to the family or community. In smaller towns or close-knit communities, confidentiality can be a real challenge, and people may fear that once they tell one person, everyone will know.

These realities mean that disclosure requires not just honesty, but courage — and it's completely normal for people living with HIV to take time before deciding when and how to share their status.

Taking Care Before You Share
Before disclosing, it's important to think carefully about your reasons and your safety. You might ask yourself:

- Who do I trust most to respond with understanding and respect?
- Am I emotionally ready for different possible reactions?
- Do I have support if things don't go as I hope?

Speaking with a Peer navigator, or HIV support worker can help you prepare. They can guide you on your rights, help you plan the conversation, or even be there with you if needed. Remember — disclosure should happen on your terms, and only when you feel ready.

The Benefits of Disclosure
While disclosure can be challenging, many people describe feeling a huge sense of relief once it happens. When done safely, sharing your status can bring positive changes:

Emotional relief:
Hiding HIV can be draining. Sharing with someone you trust can ease stress, reduce anxiety, and help you feel lighter.

Connection and understanding: Being open allows loved ones to offer emotional or practical support. It can deepen relationships and strengthen trust.

Better health outcomes: Support from family and friends can help with staying on treatment and maintaining regular care.

Challenging stigma: Every time someone living with HIV speaks openly, it helps break down fear and misinformation in the community — making it easier for others to do the same.

Disclosure Is a Personal Journey
There is no "right" way or time to disclose your HIV status. Everyone's journey is different — shaped by their culture, background, and personal circumstances.

Whether you choose to tell only a few trusted people or live openly about your status, what matters most is that the decision belongs to you.

When disclosure does take place, it can mark a powerful moment of self-acceptance and freedom. It reminds us that living with HIV does not define who we are — it is just one part of a full, rich life that includes love, connection, and purpose.

From my experience when I finally did disclose to those closest to me I felt such a relief - this felt like a weight had been lifted of me that I had been carrying around for several years.

Always remember - no-one deserves to have HIV. Accepting your diagnosis is one of the most important choices you will need to make - when and how you do this is up to you. Talking to other positive people will play and important part in your life.

You Are Not Alone
Across Australia and around the world, many people have walked this path before you. Support networks, peer groups, and HIV organisations exist to help make disclosure — and life with HIV — safer, easier, and more empowering.
Because when we find the strength to share our story, we don't just free ourselves — we open the door for greater understanding, compassion, and acceptance for everyone.

HIV and the LAW

Workplace and Discrimination Law

- Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), HIV is considered a disability.

This means:

  - Employers cannot discriminate against someone because they are living with HIV.
  - Refusal to hire, unfair dismissal, or harassment due to HIV status is illegal.
- State anti-discrimination laws (e.g., in Victoria, NSW, Queensland) provide similar protections.

Privacy and Confidentiality

- Medical confidentiality laws protect a person's HIV status.
- Health services and employers must keep this information private unless the person consents to disclosure.
- Breaching confidentiality can result in legal consequences.

Healthcare Consent

- People living with HIV have the right to informed consent for medical treatment.
- Health professionals must provide adequate information about the risks, benefits, and alternatives to any treatment.

Criminalisation Reforms

- Recent legal reforms in many jurisdictions have aimed to:
  - Reduce criminalisation for people whose HIV is effectively managed (undetectable = untransmittable).
  - Focus on intentional harm rather than exposure without transmission.
- Some jurisdictions now differentiate between acts with negligible risk vs. actual transmission.

Support and Legal Resources

- PLHIV in Australia can access legal support and advice from:
  - AIDS Legal Network (various states)
  - HIV/AIDS Legal Centre NSW
  - Territory Legal Aid offices (state-specific)
- These organisations provide advice on criminal, civil, and workplace-related HIV issues.

The is a National resource developed by HALC HIV Legal Service.

https://halc.org.au/publications/guides-to-hiv-and-the-law/

Heterosexual Men's Advocacy Network.

Our aim is to advocate for the wellbeing of heterosexual men living with HIV in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

If you are a heterosexual man living with HIV, who might be interested to connect with other straight guys LWHIV.

Please be assured them that we pay careful attention to privacy and confidentiality. Registration essential via email: hetman@napwha.org.au

If you would need any clarification around this please feel free to call Anth on 0490 214 554 for a chat to learn more before taken the next step.
Kind regards Anth.

Positive Asian Network Australia.

How to join

Are you interested in joining PANA? This is open to all people living with HIV, of Asian-background, and living in Australia. You can find the registration form on the NAPWHA web site where you can fill in the form on line. Any any queries or questions to email: **pana@napwha.org.au**

Positive Latinx Australian Network (PLAN)

How to engage with us

Are you living with HIV in Australia? Do you identify with a Latin American or Hispanic background? We would like to hear from you. We meet regularly to advocate on behalf of ourselves. Our social network will aim to provide a safe inclusive spaces and ways to connect with each other for social connection.

It is also a way to exchange conversations relating to HIV and general health – this includes talking about navigating the healthcare system in Australia.
email: **plan@napwha.org.au**

PATSIN

The NAPWHA-auspiced Positive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network (PATSIN) is a national membership-based group for Indigenous people living with HIV (PLHIV).
For more information and how to engage with us **https://napwha.org.au/patsin/**
https://napwha.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/UsMobandHIV_2021.pdf

PATSIN works within Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander communities and service providers to represent the interests of Indigenous Australians. It exists to provide an outlet for exchanging experiences and knowledge about HIV, and to advocate for change at the community level.

PATSIN is committed to increasing education and addressing the high-level of HIV stigma within Indigenous communities.

LIVING POSITIVE - Northern Territory

A forum to be held before the end of 2025

This will be a safe space to share, discuss, and explore the unique challenges of living with HIV in remote and regional areas.

Who is this for?

People living with HIV in the Northern Territory who want to connect, be heard, and contribute to building stronger support networks.

Why join?

- Share your experiences and challenges living with HIV in remote regions
- Discuss what support or services are missing or needed
- Build connections with others who understand your journey
- Contribute to shaping programs and services for positive people across the NT

Together, we can identify what's missing and create a stronger, connected community for all people living with HIV in the NT.

LIVING POSITIVE – Northern Territory

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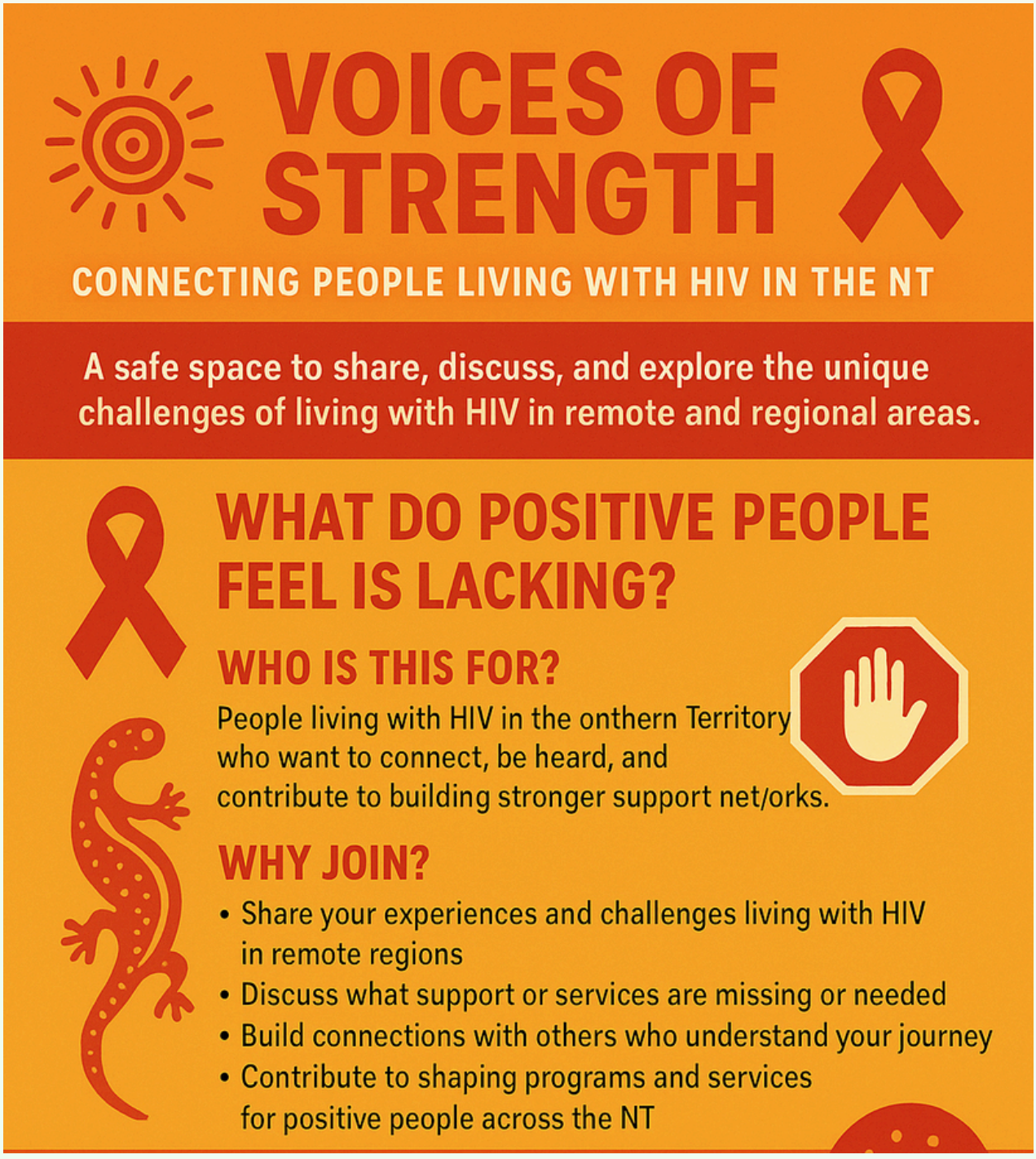

Where and when to be confirmed