

THE PATIENT PRESCRIPTION

Your Health Begins Here



Quality Spotlight - HIV/AIDS

HopeHealth's quality focus for the month of December is HIV/AIDS. This focus includes topics like increasing screenings and HIV prevention measures. Below, read about treatment options for preventing HIV.

Know Your HIV Prevention Options

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December is HIV/AIDS Awareness Month. It is a time to bring attention to HIV/AIDS, increase knowledge and awareness, and speak out against stigma. With current medications available to prevent HIV, the global health community is working to end the disease worldwide.

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, attacks immune cells, making it difficult for the body to fight infections and diseases. If HIV is not treated, it can lead to end-stage HIV called AIDS, or autoimmune deficiency syndrome. More than 30,000 people are diagnosed with HIV each year. Poorly managed HIV and AIDS both increase the risk of very serious infections in the brain, lungs, blood, or digestive tract, as well as certain types of cancer, including lymphoma, lung, or liver cancers.



The virus is transmitted through bodily fluids, including blood, semen, rectal and vaginal fluids, and breast milk. Often, people think HIV is only a risk for gay or transgender men, but the truth is that the virus can infect anyone. The two most common ways a person will contract HIV are through unprotected vaginal or anal intercourse with someone who has HIV, or by sharing drug equipment, such as needles, with an infected person. Often HIV status is not known or discussed prior to sex with a new partner. Additionally, unknown status and possible exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections is one of many considerations survivors must process while coping with sexual assault.

HIV can be spread from a mom to an unborn baby or by needlesticks, although the risk is very low for health care workers. The virus is not spread by kissing, hugging, eating, drinking, or using the bathroom after someone with HIV.

So far, there is no cure for HIV. We only have antiretroviral medications to control the virus in our body. However, the great news is we have medications that can protect us from acquiring HIV. If someone is HIV-negative and exhibits high-risk behavior (unprotected sex, same-sex intercourse, being diagnosed with a previous sexually transmitted infection, or injecting drugs), taking preventive medication as prescribed can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by up to 99%.

Access to HIV medication for prevention is not available in all countries, and a lack of awareness in the public further inhibits access. Only 36 percent of the 1.2 million people in the U.S. who may be at risk for acquiring HIV are taking prevention drugs. Many Americans may think they aren't at risk or don't know preventive medication is available.

HIV prevention has transformed since 2012, when antiretroviral medications first became available for high-risk individuals. Medication prevention protocols are targeted for short-term or long-term use: PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) for emergency prevention, and PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) for long-term prevention. Prophylaxis means to prevent or control, as in the spread of disease, and both are used to avoid an HIV infection.

PEP is for emergencies only, such as a condom break, sexual assault, or finding out about HIV exposure after an event. It entails a short-term course of medication to prevent developing HIV. Every hour counts after exposure to HIV; medication should be started 72 hours or less after potential exposure for the drugs to work properly in preventing HIV. It is extremely important to contact your health care provider, an urgent care provider, or an emergency room physician immediately after risk of HIV exposure. If it's been 72 hours, regular testing is still vital.

PrEP is for those who are regularly exposed to HIV, and often people who use PEP three or more times will be offered ongoing prevention treatment. Candidates for PrEP may include IV drug users, a person in a relationship with someone with HIV, someone with multiple partners, or sex workers. A woman who becomes pregnant with a man with known HIV can also utilize PrEP to protect herself and her baby.

Antiretroviral drugs for HIV prevention are available in pill and injectable form and can be used for at-risk adults and adolescents weighing at least 77 pounds. While it's not a guarantee, taking these medications as prescribed before or after exposure can decrease the risk of HIV by up to 99% for unprotected sex and up to 75% for IV drug users. Some people may have side effects, such as headaches or gastrointestinal issues, that usually resolve after a few days. Always talk to your provider about any medication side effects.

PEP and PrEP medications and injections must be taken exactly as prescribed for maximum benefit in decreasing your risk of acquiring HIV. Prevention also includes blood tests for HIV, routine lab work, and checking for STIs, depending on each situation. Education on safe sex or IV drug use to prevent further exposure is also important.

Most insurance plans, along with Medicare and Medicaid, now cover PrEP and PEP medications. There are also services available for the uninsured. HopeHealth receives funding from the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to provide services for underserved populations with HIV/AIDS.

The long-term goal in the U.S. is to end the HIV epidemic through prevention and treatment. If you are at high risk or have questions about HIV, prevention strategies, or need HIV testing, contact HopeHealth's Infectious Diseases department. Call (843) 667-9414 or visit hope-health.org to learn more.

Holiday Closure Reminder



HopeHealth Holiday Hours

Tuesday, December 24: 8 am - 12 pm

Wednesday, December 25: Closed

Tuesday, December 31: 8 am - 12 pm

Wednesday, January 1: Closed

HopeHealth Pharmacy Holiday Hours

Tuesday, December 24: 9 am - 1 pm

Wednesday, December 25: Closed

Tuesday, December 31: 9 am - 1 pm

Wednesday, January 1: Closed

Access Hope Holiday Hours

Tuesday, December 24: 8 am - 12 pm (Manning is closed)

Wednesday, December 25: Closed

Tuesday, December 31: 8 am - 12 pm

Wednesday, January 1: Closed

Normal hours will resume on Thursday, January 2.

Online Bill Pay

Did you know that you can conveniently and securely pay your HopeHealth bill online? You don't even have to be signed up for the patient portal. [Visit this link](#) or use the "Online Bill Pay" button on the home page of our website, hope-health.org.

Online Bill Pay

Post & Courier Reader's Choice Awards



Congratulations to our winners of the Post & Courier Reader's Choice Awards!

Best Counselor:
Nicholas Lee, LPC, NCC

Finalists:
Best Family Practice + Best Pediatric Care

Winter Tips for Seniors



Tips to Practice Fall Prevention in Cold Weather:

- Keep your entryway clear of clutter to avoid slipping or tripping.
- If possible, stay inside when the weather is bad. Consider delivery services for prescriptions, groceries, and other necessities.
- Avoid shoveling snow or ice yourself when possible. There is a risk of heart attack for older adults while performing these tasks.
- Use railways to help avoid slipping on icy stairs and walkways.
- Wear non-slip, rubber-soled, low-heeled footwear.

Access Hope: After-Hours Care



Access Hope is our convenient after-hours program for patients to receive care when life doesn't go as planned.

Why HopeHealth Patients Use Access Hope:

- Your primary care provider isn't available when you're not feeling well
- You are sick after-hours or on Saturday
- You are a new patient whose busy schedule doesn't allow you to be seen during normal provider hours

Our staff of health care providers at Access Hope is available in Florence and Manning, **Monday-Saturday from 8am-8pm.**

Examples of after-hours care services provided by Access Hope are minor aches and pains, cold and flu sick visits, treatment of high blood pressure, management of diabetes and other chronic conditions, immunizations/flu shots/PPD testing, urinalysis, annual and pre-employment physicals, and STD treatment.

For more information about Access Hope, [visit our website.](#)

An on-call provider is also available 24/7 for patients.

Recipe Spotlight

Hearty Vegetable Soup

With all the holiday foods and treats around, lighter meals help balance out eating habits. This quick, yummy, and comforting veggie-loaded soup is perfect to have on hand during the holiday season!

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 medium carrots, diced
- 3 stalks celery, diced
- 2 medium potatoes, diced
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 4 cups reduced-sodium vegetable, chicken, or beef broth
- 1 cup of water
- 2 15-ounce cans of reduced-sodium diced tomatoes
- 1 cup corn kernels – if using canned, drain and rinse
- 1 15-ounce can of beans – lima, kidney, navy, or whatever you like, rinsed and drained
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice, or to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste



Directions:

1. Heat oil in a large Dutch oven over low to medium heat. Once hot, add onion and cook for 5 minutes or until softened, stirring often. Add garlic, carrots, celery, and potatoes, and cook for 5 more minutes, stirring often.
2. Add Italian seasoning, broth, water, tomatoes, corn, beans, bay leaf, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer until vegetables are tender, about 30-35 minutes.
3. Remove from heat and add parsley and lemon juice. Serve hot.

Tips:

- Add other veggies you like, such as squash, cabbage, green beans, mushrooms, and more. If you do this, add an extra cup of broth as needed.
- Add cooked lean proteins, such as chicken or beef, to the soup, or serve a protein on the side.
- You could also add all ingredients to a slow cooker and cook until done.

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hope-health.org

Support Community Health Centers at hcadvocacy.org. Become an advocate today!

HopeHealth | 360 N. Irby St. | Florence, SC 29501 US

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