

# THE PATIENT PRESCRIPTION

Your Health Begins Here



## Quality Spotlight - HIV/AIDS Care

HopeHealth's quality focus for December is HIV/AIDS care. This clinical focus includes measures like viral load suppression, HIV linkage to care, HIV screening measures, and PrEP education.

[Click here](#) to read about HIV prevention options. Below, read about the journey of HIV/AIDS care.

### The Journey of HIV: From Prevention to Treatment to Undetectable Status

**Brittany Hanes, MSN, APRN, FNP-C**

The journey of HIV in America has come a long way in 45 years. The first cases of what would be known as AIDS, later HIV, were reported in the United States in 1981. After peaking as an epidemic in the mid-1990s, research, education, prevention, and treatment have evolved, and now HIV can be well-managed. For a vast majority of people with HIV who follow their treatment plan, the virus can become undetectable with no risk of transmission, and they can live healthy, fulfilling lives.

HIV, known as the human immunodeficiency virus, weakens the immune system by attacking a type of white blood cell called CD4, making the body unable to fight infections and illnesses. Because it works backward in inserting DNA into human cells, HIV is called a retrovirus. Antiretroviral (ARV) medications are prescribed to target different phases of the HIV life cycle and keep the virus from replicating and spreading.

If not treated or managed, HIV will progress over time to AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, the final and most serious stage. Both HIV and AIDS increase the risk of serious infections in the brain, lungs, blood, or digestive tract, as well as certain types of cancer, including lymphoma, lung, or liver cancers.

While HIV rates are declining nationally, the overall infection rates are still too high. In 2022, research indicated approximately 32,000 people in the U.S. were newly infected with HIV, with an overall infection rate of 1.2 million people. Since HIV typically has no symptoms in its early stages, approximately 13% of those with HIV were unaware of their status and needed testing. By region, the South had the largest number, making up almost half of the new HIV infections.



People ages 25-34 accounted for the largest number of new HIV infections, with the second highest rate of infection in ages 13-24. 70% of those diagnosed were Black or Hispanic. Of the 32,000 infected, 67% of respondents were homosexual, bisexual, or reported male-to-male contact, 22% reported heterosexual contact, and 7% reported IV drug use.

## Prevention

Unprotected sex or sharing needles to inject drugs are the two most common ways to contract HIV. Having safe sex, not sharing needles, and regular testing as recommended by your health care provider are the first steps in prevention.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 have an HIV test at least once. Requesting an HIV test at your provider's office is an option, and online rapid HIV tests are available for purchase and in-home use. Free testing is also an option at many local colleges and universities in our state.

People with certain risk factors are recommended to get tested at least annually, including men who have sex with other men, having sex with a partner with known HIV, having more than one sex partner since the last HIV test, having a diagnosis of other sexually transmitted infections, and anyone sharing drug needles.

Two types of prevention strategies are also important in the fight against HIV:

- **PEP or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis** – PEP is a medication regimen used to prevent HIV infection after a potential exposure to the virus. It is vital to see a health care provider within 72 hours after a possible exposure and start the antiretroviral medication to prevent HIV, with follow-up testing at 30 and 90 days. If a person utilizes PEP for unprotected sex three times or more, PrEP is recommended.
- **PrEP or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis** – PrEP is a medicine that reduces your chance of getting HIV for those who have unprotected sex regularly, have sex with a partner with known HIV who is not undetectable, or share IV drug needles. ARV medications are prescribed with testing at regular intervals, usually every three to six months, to determine transmission. For those not on PrEP, regular condom use and testing every three to six months is recommended.

Another important prevention tip is to make safe sex a priority and use a condom. Before having sex with a new partner, discuss sexual and drug-use history, disclose your HIV status, and consider getting tested together.

## Treatment

If the HIV test comes back positive, a confirmed test will be performed at your health care provider's office before making a diagnosis.

Once a person has been diagnosed with HIV, ARV medications and regular blood work are the two mainstays of treatment. There are two primary blood tests for assessing HIV:

- A **CD4 blood test** measures the amount of CD4 cells, determining the immune function level for HIV
- An **HIV viral load blood test** measures the amount of HIV in a sample of blood to assess how the virus level is responding to medications and assess the risk of transmission.

People diagnosed with HIV who take their medications as prescribed can typically lower the viral load to a level at which the virus cannot be transmitted to another person. This status also keeps the immune system strong and decreases the risks of HIV-related complications.

A national awareness program called U=U or Undetectable = Untransmittable has been developed to help prevent transmission of HIV. The U=U status helps promote a higher quality of life, reduces the stigma and discrimination for those living with HIV, and promotes more access to HIV services and care.

HopeHealth started as Hope for the Pee Dee, an HIV service organization, in 1991. Now, as a community health center, we continue to provide HIV testing, education, and high-quality medical care, serving Florence, Aiken, and Orangeburg. Our case managers also help individuals with medication assistance, transportation, housing, employment, and other support to maximize the quality of life for our patients.

HIV is not a death sentence anymore, and reducing stigma means learning more about the disease and getting tested and treated. If you have questions or concerns about your HIV status, don't delay in finding help.

## HopeHealth Hosted Annual AIDSWalk



HopeHealth hosted its annual AIDSWalk on Saturday, December 6, at the Streater Community Center, with the theme "Walk A While In My Boots." HIV advocate Johneri'O Scott was the keynote speaker this year. Scott has lived with HIV for over 10 years and now dedicates his life to advocacy and visibility for people living with HIV. The event also featured a resource fair and coffee bar, as well as lunch and t-shirts.

HopeHealth has hosted AIDSWalk since 1993. The event serves to bring awareness about the importance of prevention, treatment, and breaking the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.

## HopeHealth Holiday Closures





### **HopeHealth Holiday Hours**

Wednesday, December 24: 8 am - 12 pm

Thursday, December 25: Closed

Wednesday, December 31: 8 am - 12 pm

Thursday, January 1: Closed

### **Additionally, below are individual location closures:**

**Manning Peds:** Closed Dec. 26 | **Manning Adult:** Closed Dec. 26 afternoon

**Kingtree:** Closed Dec. 26 | **Greeleyville:** Closed Dec. 26

**Hemingway:** Closed Dec. 22-26, Dec. 29-30, Jan. 1-2

**FMU:** Closed Dec. 26 | **Aiken:** Closed Dec. 26

**The Manor:** Closed Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 | **Bethesda:** Closed Dec. 26

### **HopeHealth Pharmacy Holiday Hours**

Wednesday, December 24: 9 am - 1 pm

Thursday, December 25: Closed

Wednesday, December 31: 9 am - 1 pm

Thursday, January 1: Closed

For the most up-to-date information, visit the [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

**Bring Your Medications To Appointments!**

# BRING YOUR MEDICATIONS TO APPOINTMENTS

THIS HELPS YOUR PROVIDER  
PREVENT **ADVERSE DRUG EVENTS**



Did you know that more than 1.5 million people visit emergency departments for adverse drug events each year in America, and almost 500,000 require hospitalization? Bringing all of your medications in their original containers to your appointments helps keep your provider in the know so you can stay healthy!

**Veteran Emergency Fund**



Veteran Services would like to thank Senator Mike Reichenbach and his wife, Charisse, for their generous donation to our Veteran Emergency Fund. This fund is used to support our Veterans and their families during times of financial crisis.

## Recipe Spotlight

### Roasted Root Vegetables

A simple and delicious vegetable side for the holidays or any time! Serves 6.

#### Ingredients:

- 2-3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3-4 medium-sized carrots, peeled and cut into 1½ inch cuts
- ½ pound (or 2 cups) of Brussels sprouts, halved with outer leaves discarded
- 1 pound (or 3 cups) of baby red potatoes, halved or quartered
- 1 pound (or 3 cups) of sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped into 1½ -inch squares
- 1 large (or 2 cups) red onion, halved and cut into thick 1-inch pieces
- ¾ teaspoon rosemary, dried and crushed
- ¾ teaspoon oregano, dried
- 1 teaspoon thyme, dried
- 1 teaspoon basil, dried
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Parmesan cheese for garnish (optional)



#### Directions:

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Have one large sheet pan (15x21 inches) or two medium sheet pans (11x17 inches) ready to go. Lining the pan with parchment paper makes for easy clean-up.

- Place all veggies on the sheet pan and top with olive oil. Add herbs, salt, and pepper, and mix well with your hands until the vegetables are evenly coated. Spread evenly on the sheet pan, so they aren't overlapping or crowded.
- Roast for 20 minutes, then remove from the oven. Flip and spread the veggies out again, and roast for an additional 15-20 minutes or until done.
- Top with parmesan cheese, if desired, and serve.

Visit [hope-health.org/community/events](https://hope-health.org/community/events) to learn about and sign up for free community classes offered by HopeHealth! Topics range from healthy cooking to diabetes management, prioritizing movement, carbohydrate counting, and more.

---

How satisfied were you with the content of this email?

1 - Very Dissatisfied

2 - Dissatisfied

3 - Neutral

4 - Satisfied

5 - Very Satisfied

Care to offer more feedback? [Click here](#) to send an email!

## HopeHealth QuickLinks

[Locations](#)

[Services](#)

[Providers](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[hope-health.org](https://hope-health.org)

Support Community Health Centers at [hcadvocacy.org](https://hcadvocacy.org). Become an advocate today!

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

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Our Privacy Policy](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)