



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
COMMISSION ON HIV



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Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19 and People Living with HIV
A Message to the Community and Our Partners
March 16, 2020

The Los Angeles County (LAC) Commission on HIV, in partnership and consultation with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's (Public Health) Division of HIV and STD Programs (DHSP) and local HIV service organizations, offers this message to help promote and protect the health and safety of people living with HIV in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by SARS-CoV-2, a novel (new) coronavirus. The novel coronavirus is understood to spread mainly from person-to-person through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or when a person touches a surface with these droplets and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. Common symptoms in a person with the novel coronavirus infection include fever, dry cough and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

Persons living with controlled HIV (i.e. normal CD4 count and undetectable viral load) do not appear to be at greater risk than the general public for either acquiring or becoming ill with the coronavirus. Persons living with HIV, however, may be at increased risk for an adverse response to the infection if they have:

- Low CD4 cell counts, particularly under 350 cells/ml (considered not virally suppressed and therefore at higher risk);
- 60 years of age and older;
- Heart, lung, or kidney disease;
- Other poorly managed health conditions, including hypertension and diabetes.

Public Health recommends that individuals at higher risk for serious illness associated with COVID-19 take the following actions and precautions:

- Practice regular handwashing (20 seconds with soap and hot water);
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow;
- Have a 30-day supply of all medications;
- Remain fully adherent to all regularly prescribed medications;
- Make sure all your vaccinations are current, including against influenza ("flu") and pneumonia;
- Practice social distancing (this means limiting the time you spend in public and keeping a 6-foot distance between yourself and strangers when you are in public);

- Stay home if you are even mildly sick;
- Call your health care provider before seeking medical care so that appropriate precautions can be taken.

All clinical and non-clinical HIV service delivery providers can take steps to promote and protect health of Los Angeles County residents and in anticipation of a more severe epidemic. Clinics should be preparing to 1) help respond to a broader coronavirus-related public health emergency and 2) maintain their capacity to provide critical HIV care and treatment services. This includes establishing a plan for telemedicine or other mechanisms for providing patient care remotely. Providers should continue to support patients with HIV to achieve and maintain viral suppression; ensure that patients have received recommended influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations; talk to patients about maintaining at least a 30-day supply of all prescribed medications; and encourage patients to practice social distancing and maintain social networks remotely.

We recognize that people experiencing homelessness are extremely vulnerable and not always in a position to adopt basic disease-prevention precautions. The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) has launched an informational [site](#) to communicate their activities related to COVID-19.

Please find below, a list of links to additional information that may be useful during this difficult public health crisis. As the COVID-19 situation evolves, we will disseminate additional information and updates. Thank you.

Resources:

- Video message from Dr. Hal Yee, Chief Medical Officer, LAC, Department of Health Services <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-QyLKcUSX0&feature=youtu.be>
- Visit [LA County Public Health Department's website](#) for the latest news on COVID-19.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>
- Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) guidance: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Special-notice--COVID-19-resources-for-healthcare-providers.html?soid=1103684938887&aid=q0FfpYf9Y7M>.
- Positive Women's Network (PWN) <https://www.pwn-usa.org/wegotthis-to-our-pwn-family-regarding-the-coronavirus-epidemic/>
- National Coalition of STD Control Directors (NCSDD) <https://www.ncsddc.org/resource/covid-command-center-for-std-programs/>
- CA LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network <https://californialgbtqhealth.org/resources/coronavirus-2019-information/>
- For immigrant rights and public charge, visit LAC Office of Immigrant Affairs <https://oia.lacounty.gov/>
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH) <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx>

- Residents should go to <https://lacounty.gov/covid19/> for up-to-date information on closures, and can also find information on each County department's website.