

## Criminalization for Non-Disclosure of HIV

In Canada, it is required by law that people living with HIV tell sexual partners about their HIV status before having sex. If you choose not to tell your HIV status to your sexual partner/s, you could be prosecuted with criminal charges.

The only time you do not have to tell your HIV status to your partner is:

- If you are **taking HIV medications** properly and the virus is undetectable  
AND
- You use a **condom** during vaginal, anal, or oral sex

## DRUMBEAT **Drumbeat Program at HIV Community Link**



Drumbeat engages African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities in Calgary through HIV education and outreach. The program works closely with members of African, Caribbean, and Black communities to **reduce stigma** and **improve access to testing, treatment, and support services**.

### We provide:

- Information, education and outreach
- Access to one-on-one support, referrals and counselling for people living with HIV
- Safer sex and safer drug use supplies

Drumbeat Program services are **free of cost and open to all community members**.



## CONTACT US:

Drumbeat African Communities Program  
HIV Community Link  
#110, 1603 10th Avenue SW Calgary, AB

(403) 508-2500 (ext. 109)

[www.hivcl.org/drumbeat](http://www.hivcl.org/drumbeat)



[drumbeat@hivcl.org](mailto:drumbeat@hivcl.org)



[facebook.com/AfricanCommunitiesProgram](https://facebook.com/AfricanCommunitiesProgram)

### Other Resources in Calgary:

#### Calgary STI Clinic

1213-4th Street SW, 5th Floor. Calgary  
Phone: (403) 955-6700  
Free and confidential HIV & STI testing & treatment

#### Safeworks

Mobile Van Phone : (403) 850-3755  
Free and confidential HIV & hepatitis C testing  
Safer sex and safer drug use supplies

#### The SHARP Foundation

Phone: (403) 272-2912  
Supportive housing programs for People Living with HIV

#### The Southern Alberta HIV Clinic (SAC)

1213-4th Street SW, Room 3223, 3rd Floor. Calgary  
Phone: (403) 955-6399  
HIV treatment and medical services (referral required)

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ALL ABOUT  
**HIV**  
IN CALGARY



Although we may not hear much about it, HIV is very real in our communities. HIV affects people of **every gender, age, and culture**. Anyone can acquire HIV. There is no need to be shy about it. We need information and education to reduce the stigma, make healthier choices and support people who are living with HIV.

### What is HIV

HIV means **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**. HIV is a very small germ that can be passed from one person to another through direct contact with one of these body fluids: **blood, semen, breast milk, vaginal and anal fluids**.

### Ways HIV is passed from person to person:

- Vaginal or anal sex
- Sharing needles, syringes and other equipment to inject drugs
- Tattooing and scarification such as tribal markings
- Mother to child transmission during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding

### Ways HIV is NOT passed from person to person:

- Sharing food or utensils
- Urine, or toilet seats
- Touching, hugging or kissing
- Swimming pools, water fountains
- Sharing bed sheets or towels
- Saliva, coughing or sneezes
- Living with or caring for people with HIV
- Insects or animals

### What does HIV do?

HIV weakens your body's ability to fight off infections. When the body's immune system is weak, it is easier to get sick. If you become very sick with certain infections, this may be called **AIDS** (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).



With proper medical treatment, people living with HIV can live a long and healthy life. However, there is no cure for HIV.

Many people living with HIV do not get sick for many years and do not know they are HIV positive for many years. This is why getting tested is so important.

### Testing

The only way to know if you have HIV is to get **tested**. Many people living with HIV do not get sick for many years, are not aware they have HIV in their body, and may pass the virus to others.



**1 in 7 people** living with HIV in Canada are unaware of their status. Early testing and treatment will greatly improve the health of people living with HIV. The test for HIV is a simple and free blood test. A person has to ask their health care provider for an HIV test and personal consent is required.

It can take 3 weeks to 3 months after the virus has entered the body before it will show up in a test.

### How can you protect yourself from HIV transmission?

- Use condoms when having sex. Condoms provide protection from HIV for both you and your partner
- Do not share needles, syringes or other supplies for injecting drugs. Always use new, sterile equipment every time. Ensure that you are using new, sterile equipment for tattooing or scarification of tribal markings
- Know your HIV status by getting tested
- People who are at risk for HIV can take Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) medication to protect them from becoming HIV positive. PrEP works very well to reduce the risk of HIV transmission

### Immigration and HIV



Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) may require an Immigrant Medical Exam for immigrant and refugee applicants. The medical exam includes a screening test for HIV for everyone over the age of 15. The decision for admission to Canada is not only based on their HIV status. Many people living with HIV have immigrated to Canada.

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan covers costs for HIV care, counselling and medications. Refugee claimants who have received an acknowledgment of claim from the Government of Canada are covered through the Interim Federal Health Program.

In most cases, people who do not have an Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan or Interim Federal Health Program need private health insurance or will have to pay for medication.

### Undetectable=Untransmittable

If you take your HIV medications properly according to your doctor's advice, the amount of HIV virus in your body gets very low. This is sometimes called "undetectable". When your blood has an undetectable level of virus, you cannot transmit HIV to your sexual partners. It is important to continue taking medications every day, to maintain an undetectable level.

### Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

PrEP is a medication taken by an HIV negative person to reduce their risk of getting HIV. Anyone thinking about using PrEP to protect from HIV can talk to their doctor or contact the Drumbeat Program at HIV Community Link for more information. **PrEP is free for everyone who has an Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.**

### Preventing Mother to Child Transmission

HIV can pass from mother to the baby during pregnancy, birth or breast-feeding. HIV positive mothers can reduce the risk of HIV transmission to their babies by taking medication. In Canada, breastfeeding is NOT recommended for mothers living with HIV. Mothers or caregivers living with HIV should avoid per-chewing of food for the baby. **Southern Alberta Clinic in Calgary provides free baby formula to all new mothers living with HIV for up to one year.**

