

WHEN WAS YOUR LAST GYN EXAM

if you're HIV+ ?



Did you know that 85% of female HIV/AIDS cases are women of color?

And that being HIV+ increases the risk of GYN problems?

To be healthy, an HIV+ woman has to take extra good care of herself.

That means being sure to have a complete GYN exam every year.

Preventive care = health

It is extremely important for women, especially HIV+ women, to get regular GYN care.

First things first: do you have a regular GYN specialist or a place to go? If not, talk to your HIV doctor, case manager, or some other support person to help you find someone.

Having a GYN specialist is important because you need to get regular Pap tests (the test checking for cervical cancer) because HIV+ women are ten times more likely to have abnormal Pap tests. Plus it helps to get to know your GYN specialist, so that you feel comfortable and can get the information that you need.

It is important to find a GYN specialist who has experience treating HIV+ women. Your GYN specialist needs to know that you are HIV+, so he or she can inform you of possible complications or hormonal changes and provide you with the best care. **Remember, this information is confidential.**

These are some questions you should ask your GYN specialist:

- How often should I have a Pap test?
- Will there be any interactions between the medications that I am already taking and any new medications/birth control you may prescribe?
- Can HIV or HIV medications affect my hormone levels?

Questions you may have

IF I WANT TO GET OR AM ALREADY PREGNANT, WILL I GIVE HIV TO MY BABY?
There are many ways you can plan for a healthy pregnancy, including talking with a counselor, visiting your GYN specialist, and reading about pregnancy.

Your GYN specialist will discuss with you the risks and benefits of taking HIV treatments during pregnancy to reduce the rate of mother-to-child transmission. The GYN specialist will also explain why you should not breastfeed your baby, so you can avoid transmitting HIV.

HOW WILL HIV AFFECT MENOPAUSE?

HIV+ women may experience menopause earlier than women who are HIV-, but the symptoms seem to be the same for both groups. If you choose to use hormonal replacement therapies, it is very important to ask your GYN specialist about possible drug interactions with your HIV medications.

The bottom line:

Love and respect yourself by having a complete GYN examination at least once a year. Be informed, ask questions, and take control of your health!

Contact:

For HIV prevention and access to HIV care, contact Project Street Beat at Planned Parenthood of New York City:

- Bronx Office: 212-965-4850
- Brooklyn Office: 212-965-4885
- Harlem Office: 212-368-2394

■ www.ppnyc.org

The GYN specialist will check for GYN conditions

GYN conditions that are usually simple to treat may be more serious in HIV+ women. Sometimes you may have a condition and not have any symptoms or may not recognize the symptoms. Listed below are some symptoms of common GYN conditions:

■ BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS

Fishy smell, thin, grayish-white discharge.

■ CHLAMYDIA

Bleeding between periods, painful periods, pain during sex or urination (symptoms that are easily missed).

■ GENITAL HERPES

Burning or itchy genital skin, blister-like sores (outbreaks may be more frequent for women with HIV).

■ GONORRHEA

Greenish-yellow discharge, pelvic pain, burning during urination, bleeding between periods, red and itchy eyes.

■ HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV) – ALSO CALLED GENITAL WARTS

Small flesh-colored warts or growths often in clusters of three or more in genital area. Some people never get warts, but may still have the virus, which can cause cervical cancer. Pap tests check for this virus.

■ PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID)

Dull pain in lower abdomen, yellow or green discharge with an unusual odor, pain during sex or urination, nausea, and vomiting. Untreated gonorrhea or chlamydia can cause this infection. It can travel into the cervix and may lead to cervical cancer.

■ SYPHILIS

Initial stage: large, hard, painless sores, that can heal without treatment. Second stage: rash on palms of hands or soles of feet or moist warts in groin, swollen lymph nodes, fever, and weight loss. Third stage: severe problems with the nervous system, brain, heart, and other organs, that can result in blindness, paralysis, or even death. It is possible to have no symptoms in the early stages and still wind up with the serious problems of the third stage.

■ TRICHOMONIASIS (TRICH)

Yellowish-green, foamy discharge, itching, strange odor, pain during sex and urination.

■ YEAST INFECTIONS

Vaginal itching, pain or burning with urination or sex, white discharge (curd-like and odorless).

All these conditions are treatable and some are completely curable. Be sure to see your GYN specialist right away if you have any symptoms, and have a GYN exam once a year even if you don't have these symptoms!

PROJECT STREET BEAT

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