



April 30, 2020

Updated: Novel Coronavirus and People with HIV

Dear Colleague,

The New York City Health Department continues to receive questions from HIV care providers about specific guidance for people with HIV during the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

People with HIV should generally follow the same COVID-19-related guidance as the public at large. New York City provides specific guidance for [people with HIV](#) and [providers of HIV and STI services](#), and tips [for safer sex](#). Additionally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has detailed [guidance](#) for HIV patients and care providers.

The main [risk factors](#) for severe COVID-19-related illness are age 50 years and older and comorbidities such as diabetes and chronic respiratory or cardiovascular disease. HIV infection has not been identified as a risk factor. However, immunocompromised people — including people with HIV with low CD4 counts — may be at elevated risk for severe illness.

At this time, everyone — including people with HIV — should stay home and avoid visiting a hospital unless they require care for severe illness. HIV care clinics should provide most patient care through [telemedicine](#) or another mechanism for remote care. Reserve in-person HIV care for urgent medical concerns. When possible, delay specimen collection for laboratory testing, and postpone complex care, such as that involved in switching HIV treatment regimens. Providers can support patients to start or continue antiretroviral therapy to achieve and maintain viral suppression; help them maintain their supply of medications; support them to maintain their mental health and social networks; and ensure they have received recommended influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations.

The coronavirus outbreak is rapidly evolving. We will share any updates to specific guidance for people with HIV.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oni Blackstock".

Oni Blackstock, MD, MHS
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of HIV
New York City Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene