

Let's stop HIV together.™

A Guide to Talking About HIV

Certain words and language used in the context of HIV and AIDS may have a negative meaning for those who are at high risk for getting HIV or those who are living with HIV. Using such words or language may result in real or perceived stigma, discrimination, fear, and anxiety, which may prevent some people from getting tested or treated for HIV. We can do our part by being thoughtful when choosing our words and choosing to use supportive—rather than stigmatizing—language when talking openly about HIV.

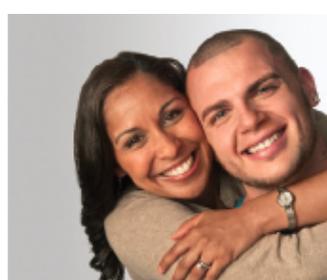
Consider the preferred terms below to avoid promoting stigma and misinformation.

STOP	GO	WHY
<i>These words and phrases can cause people to experience stigma, may lead to discrimination, and may be incorrect.</i>	<i>Use these words and phrases when talking about HIV. They are correct and nonstigmatizing.</i>	<i>Be aware of why these words or phrases are problematic. Get the facts.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Body fluids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Blood ✓ Amniotic fluid ✓ Semen ✓ Pre-ejaculate ✓ Breast milk ✓ Vaginal fluids 	Only some body fluids transmit HIV. “Body fluids” covers all fluids coming from the body and not just those involved in HIV transmission. Be specific if you can.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X To battle HIV and/or AIDS X War against HIV/AIDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Response to HIV and AIDS 	These terms may be considered militaristic and may lead others to think that people living with HIV have to be “fought” or eliminated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X High(er) risk group(s) X Groups with high-risk behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ High-risk behavior (condomless sex, sharing needles, etc.) ✓ Highly affected communities ✓ Key populations ✓ Key populations at higher risk 	These terms imply that membership in a particular group can result in an HIV-positive diagnosis. They may also provide a false sense of security to those who do not self-identify with one of these groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X AIDS (when referring to the virus, HIV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ HIV ✓ HIV and AIDS (when referring to both) 	AIDS itself is not a condition. It is a range of conditions, or a syndrome, that occurs when a person’s immune system is weakened by the HIV infection.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X AIDS patient X HIV patient X Patient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Person with HIV ✓ Person living with HIV ✓ HIV-positive person 	<p>The term “patient” implies a constant state of illness that can be misleading and demoralizing. Outside of a clinical context, a person is not a patient.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Positives X HIVers X AIDS or HIV carrier(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ HIV-positive people/person ✓ People/person living with HIV 	<p>A person is not HIV. A person lives with HIV once infected with the virus.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Victims X Sufferers X Contaminated X Sick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ People/person living with HIV 	<p>Some people living with HIV feel that these terms imply that they are powerless, with no control over their lives. These terms also segregate the people currently living with HIV.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X To catch AIDS X To catch HIV X To pass on HIV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To be diagnosed with HIV ✓ To acquire HIV ✓ To transmit HIV 	<p>AIDS cannot be caught or transmitted. People become infected with HIV. HIV can be transmitted but not inherited.</p>



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