

Ida's Story

Be Smart. Be Well. – STD Videos

[Announcer] This podcast is presented the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Ida] I couldn't believe him. I said, "Wait a minute. What are you talking about? I'm not HIV-positive." I was married, in church, doing the right thing. What would put me at risk?

I had went to get a job, you know? Working in dialysis, the only way you could change companies was to get another HIV test. The doctor looked at me like he had seen a ghost. He said, "You're Mrs. Byther?" He said, "I'm here to tell you about your HIV test." I'm looking at him like, "Big deal." When the doctor told me, I couldn't believe him. I said, "You got the wrong person."

Well, I found out I was positive January 7, 1991. I went home that day and I got a call. And I said, "You know what, I just come from the doctor, and I got some very bad news, and I don't want to talk with you right now." And he said, "Well, what did the doctor tell you?" I said, "That ain't your business." He said, "Since you won't tell me, let me tell you. The doctor told you you was HIV-positive." He said, "The reason I know is because I told your husband that I was infected when we got involved, and he said it didn't matter." All I could hear was "your husband" and "me" and "involved." This was a man talking to me.

I was angry. I was angry with God. I was devastated. I found out I had full-blown AIDS Christmas Day, 2000.

(Siren wailing)

I was so sick. My body temperature was so high, they rushed me to the hospital. I did a whole lot of praying and really, God and me had some one-on-one time. The drugs seemed like they started working right away. I really credit the medication. If you work it, it'll work, but you cannot cheat; you can't be missing medication.

I felt that I had to give back, so I started Jo-Ray House for the guys living with the virus.

(Indistinct conversation)

I started a support group also, for women that was infected by their significant others.

I think people choose to be uneducated about HIV and AIDS. People feel like, "What I don't know won't hurt me." But I tell people all the time, "What you don't know can kill you."

My message to young people is, "No glove, no love." Next, make sure that the person that you get involved with has been tested and you've been tested. You cannot look at a person and say, "Oh, this person is HIV-positive," "Oh, this person is not," "Oh, I'm safe with this person." No,

no, no, no, no. You take nothing for granted, whether you're married, single, engaged, or whatever.

A lot people say, "Well, the faces of AIDS has changed." They really have changed. I am the face of AIDS.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24-7.