



Guidance on COVID-19 for People Living with HIV ***Updated 27 March 2020***

As you know, COVID-19, the novel coronavirus and disease, is spreading across the United States, including the San Francisco Bay Area. As of today, more than 275 people have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in San Francisco. This is a notable increase since last week, and probably reflects both an increase in the number of people who are infected with COVID-19 and an increase in the testing capacity of the local health care systems. The city of San Francisco, including all of its medical centers, are screening persons with symptoms of possible COVID-19, and are caring for patients who test positive.

Measures to try to stop the spread of this virus are more important than ever. “Shelter in place” orders have been enacted in San Francisco and other Bay Area counties to try to limit transmission of the COVID-19 virus. “Shelter in place” directs us to avoid contact with persons other than household members. Everyone other than “essential workers” (defined in References, below) is asked to stay indoors, except for essential activities (essential activities include going to the store for food or to the pharmacy for medicines). Outside walks and exercise are allowed, but you should stay 6 feet away from anyone you do not live with.

Additionally, people who are more vulnerable (e.g. over age 60, living with heart disease, lung disease, significant immune suppression, or other health problems), are asked to stay indoors at all times, if possible. We do not currently know if HIV on its own can increase a person’s risk of getting COVID-19, or if HIV raises the risk of having more severe disease, but certainly people with other underlying health conditions should take these precautions. And, it is important to wash your hands with soap and water frequently, and avoid touching your face. Remember that standard influenza is still circulating and it is not too late to get an influenza vaccine (“flu shot”) if you have not yet gotten one this season.

“Social distancing,” and even just the specter of COVID-19, can result in anxiety and loneliness. People with mental health or substance use challenges may be particularly vulnerable to the stresses of isolation, but everyone may be affected. Remember that “social distancing” really just means *physical* distancing (6 feet) from people who are not in your household. It is very important to maintain *social* contacts, as much as possible, during this stressful time. Especially if you are staying in your home, keep in touch with others through phone or video calls, and social media. Contact your health care providers know if you experience more depression, anxiety, or other symptoms of stress.



Meanwhile, it is important for people with HIV to maintain (or achieve) viral suppression with antiretroviral therapy (ART) in order to preserve the health of their immune system. You should continue to take your ART medicines every day (or start ART, if you are not already on it – discuss with your clinician). Note that there is no evidence that any ART medications are effective against COVID-19, and there is no reason to change ART because of COVID-19. Keep a supply of all your prescription medications on hand, and be sure to order refills on schedule. Let your primary provider know if you are having trouble obtaining your refills. If you are not able to reach your provider for refills, you may call the Ward 86 PFAST pager (415-443-3892) for assistance Monday-Friday, 9 AM-5 PM.

If you have flu-like symptoms, such as fever and cough, you should *contact* your primary provider. Most clinics are now screening patients by telephone and are asking patients not to go to clinics unless directed to do so, in order to avoid unnecessary possible exposures to the virus. Of course, if you are severely ill, you should go to an emergency room. Otherwise, your clinic will instruct you how and where your symptoms can be evaluated and treated; you will be offered testing for flu and coronavirus if clinically indicated.

Resources

For San Francisco Resources:

- San Francisco DPH link: <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus.asp>
- UCSF Hospital Epidemiology and Infection Prevention COVID-19 webpage: <https://infectioncontrol.ucsfmedicalcenter.org/ucsf-health-covid-19-resources>
- Kaiser Permanente COVID-19 link: <https://mydoctor.kaiserpermanente.org/covid-19/>

The following people may leave their place of residence to:

1) Operate an Essential Business, which includes:

- Healthcare operations, including home health workers;
- Essential Infrastructure, including construction of housing and operation of public transportation and utilities;
- Grocery stores, farmers' markets, food banks, convenience stores;
- Businesses that provide necessities of life for economically disadvantaged individuals and shelter facilities;
- Pharmacies, health care supply stores, and health care facilities;



- Gas stations and auto repair facilities;
- Banks;
- Garbage collection;
- Hardware stores, plumbers, electricians, and other service providers necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences and other essential businesses;
- Educational institutions, for the purposes of facilitating distance learning;
- Laundromats, dry cleaners, and laundry service providers;
- Businesses that ship or deliver groceries, food, and goods directly to residences;
- Childcare facilities providing services that enable essential employees to go to work;
- Roles required for any Essential Business to “maintain basic operations,” which include security, payroll, and similar activities.

2) Perform an Essential Government Function:

- This includes all services needed to ensure the continuing operation of the government agencies and provide for the health, safety and welfare of the public.

For information from the CA Department of Public Health: www.cdph.ca.gov/covid19;
https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID19forHIVPoz_ADA.pdf

IDSA/hivma Guidance: <https://files.constantcontact.com/c70eae87001/bbb78edc-6b6e-412a-86d5-3d4ff6fb1228.pdf>

For information from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:
<https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/guidelines/html/8/covid-19-and-persons-with-hiv--interim-guidance-/0>

For information from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

For Global Daily Updates: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

For disabled adults or people over 60 who experience isolation or loneliness:

- The Institute on Aging’s “Friendship Line” – 800-971-0016; <https://www.ioaging.org/services/all-inclusive-health-care/friendship-line>