

Announcing that you have HIV (or disclosing HIV status) is a complex matter and can cause anxiety because of a fear of the response you may receive. Telling your boss is very different from telling your parents, children or brothers and sisters, or your sentimental partner or sexual partners. In Spain, disclosing your HIV status is not compulsory and is always a personal choice.

Telling the right person can nonetheless be a very enriching experience. This sheet is not intended to tell you what to do, but rather only to suggest some things for consideration if you decide to take the step. For the implications of informing health professionals of your HIV status, you may consult [Infovihtal 24 Disclosing your HIV status](#).

Should I disclose the fact I have HIV?

Before telling anyone of your HIV status, you should consider the following things:

- Why you want to tell them; it is better to do so only if you are sure it will bring you some benefit.
- How the person will react; you may have to deal with their moral prejudices or their fears and false myths about HIV or sexuality.
- Whether the person can keep it confidential, or in other words if you think they might tell others without your permission.
- How you will tell them; try to do so when you feel ready, try to normalise the illness and not to feel guilty about it.
- When you will tell them; try to find the most ideal and most comfortable possible time and place.
- If you have just been diagnosed, you may need some time to take it in yourself before telling others.

Is it a good idea?

Remember that the choice is ultimately up to you. To take the decision, it may be useful to assess your needs, concerns and expectations.

Positive aspects

- You may receive understanding and support that helps you to deal with the situation better.
- You may be able to speak openly about things that matter to you.
- You will not have to hide the fact you have HIV or lie about your health.
- Your sexual partners will be able to take informed decisions.

Negative aspects

- People may react in hurtful or not very friendly ways, or even aggressively.
- You are exposing yourself to rejection or discriminatory treatment by other people.
- You may be subject to inappropriate judgements, questions or comments.

- Some people may become concerned or bewildered, making you the one who gives them information and support.

Telling your family or friends

Keeping such important information totally secret could become a burden. The decision to tell friends or family that you have HIV depends on the kind of relation and the degree of trust you have with them. You could start by thinking about whom in your immediate environment has helped you in the past and whether this is a person who accepts you, loves you, respects your privacy, and is sensible and trustworthy.

In some cultures and families it can be very hard to talk about HIV, particularly because of a lack of information, unfounded fears or prejudices. Sometimes, people who have revealed their HIV status have been subject to aggression or abuse; if you are a woman and in an abusive relationship or think that telling your partner you have HIV may lead to violence (physical aggression, insults or other forms of violence), you can call the free helpline on 016, where information, advice and attention is available in over 50 languages.

If considering whether to tell your children, you will certainly have doubts about whether they will be able to keep it confidential at school, in the street or with other family members. Children are very perceptive and it is highly likely they are already aware that something has happened. Depending on their age, some clear, basic explanations may be given and further details can be added as time goes by.

Telling your flatmates

It may be hard to keep the drugs, doctor's appointments or periods of illness secret from flatmates. Depending on the degree of trust, it could be disclosed openly or explained as a chronic illness -without mentioning HIV-. Remember that decisions about health are up to you and you are not forced to disclose them if you do not trust the people.

Living with people who do not have HIV need not involve any risk of infection to them, if they are aware of the channels of transmission and take the right preventive measures (for further information on how HIV is transmitted, you may consult [InfoHIVtal 64 HIV transmission](#)). Even in the event of close contact (sexual or blood-borne), if you are receiving antiretroviral treatment and the presence of the virus is undetectable, the risk of transmission is practically zero.

Most people around us are more at ease when they learn that we are receiving proper medical backup, that we are taking care of ourselves, or that we know where to get support.

