

**Fast Facts – Coronavirus, COVID-19 and people living with HIV**

**March 18, 2019. Contact: Jim Pickett ([jpickett@aidschicago.org](mailto:jpickett@aidschicago.org))**

All people, regardless of HIV status, need to be concerned about coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19.

Coronavirus is highly contagious and may cause a lot more sickness and death than the seasonal flu.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the flu. If you are feeling ill, please call your health care provider. They can help determine if you need to see a provider, or if you can stay at home and manage your symptoms on your own. Do not go to the ER without calling ahead!

People living with HIV who have an undetectable viral load and a t-cell count (CD4) in the normal range (more than 500) are not more vulnerable to coronavirus than other people.

People living with HIV who have a viral load over 200 or a low t-cell count (less than 200) should be sure to take extra precautions and consider themselves to be at-risk.

Please keep in mind that over 50% of people living with HIV are over 50. Many in this group have other health conditions like asthma, COPD or diabetes that could increase one's chances of becoming sick from COVID-19.

Recommended safety precautions are the same as for flu, such as frequent and thorough hand washing (20 seconds) with soap and water. Please cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue (and then throw out the tissue and wash your hands again). Avoid touching your face with your hands. If you are feeling ill, stay home!

There currently are no vaccines or cures for COVID-19. Some scientists are looking to see if drugs used to treat HIV may work for COVID-19. But there are no answers yet. As far as we know, taking HIV medications does not provide protection against, or treatment for COVID-19.

As the virus that causes COVID-19 is new, there are things that doctors and scientists don't know yet.

Remember physical distancing and social solidarity! Stay away from groups of people of any size. If you are around others outside your home, make sure to stay six feet away at all times. While you may not be able to be close to others physically, find other ways to connect and socialize through your phone, the internet, WhatsApp and FaceTime. Be kind and gentle with each other.

The CDC recommends the use of face masks only for people who are sick. Face masks should be worn by the person who is sneezing or coughing. If you are not sick, wearing a mask does not prevent you from getting the flu or COVID-19.

Don't share "fake news." Double check the source for any info you may read about COVID-19. The best sources for info on COVID-19 include the [city](#) and [state's health department](#), the [CDC](#), and [World Health Organization](#). Also, avoid too much news about COVID-19. It can be very stressful. Limit all news intake and try to watch something fun instead.