

How do I support My HIV positive friend?

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First things first: it's a big deal for your friend to tell you they are HIV positive. Recognise that your friend trusted you with this – it can be difficult to tell someone.

Your friend's HIV status is theirs, and no one else's. If your friend wants to tell other people, it is their choice to do that. But you can only share this information with others if your friend gives you permission. It's your job as a friend to keep the information safe and not tell anyone else unless your friend has told you that you can.

You can help your friend by being there for them when they need you. They might ask you to listen to them or support them when they are feeling down. They may want you to help them with something practical. Talk to them about what they need from you.

Try not to give advice unless they ask for it

Lastly, remember: your friend is still the same person they were before you knew about their status. You won't get infected by hanging out with them, talking to them or hugging them. Your friendship doesn't have to change just because you know your friend's status. It could even bring you closer. Treat your friend the way you would treat anyone you really care about – with love, respect and honesty.

If you have many friends who are HIV positive or have other health conditions, you may want to start a support group for them or link them up with a support group in your area.

If they have questions you can't answer, tell them to go to www.bwisehealth.com/article/have-more-questions-about-hiv