

HIV & mixed status couples

What are mixed status couples and what should you do if you are in one?

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What is a mixed status couple?



When one partner is HIV-negative and the other HIV-positive. This is sometimes also known as a sero-different couple.



Using protection means that mixed status couples can have sex without transmitting HIV.



Lots of people worry that being diagnosed with HIV will mean they won't be able to be in a relationship or have sex. This isn't true.

Know your status



To know if you are in a mixed status relationship both partners need to know their status.



Some couples decide to go and get tested together.



Once you know your status you can make decisions together about how to stay healthy.

Sharing your status

Telling someone that you are living with HIV can be scary, but being open is key to a successful mixed status relationship.



Remember, it is up to you how and when you tell someone.



It helps to find a time when you won't be interrupted.



Make sure they have all the facts. They will be less likely to worry if they know more about treatment and prevention.



Remember, don't take rejection personally, it can happen to anyone and is not a reflection on you.



Often sharing your status with your partner can make you feel closer.

Sex in a mixed status couple

There are now more ways for you and your partner to prevent HIV transmission.

Make sure you talk about how you will protect each other.

You can combine as many of these methods as you want, so you both feel comfortable and in control.

The diagram below shows the different methods and how you might combine them.



HIV treatment and PrEP don't prevent pregnancy or other STIs – so use another form of contraception and go for STI check-ups if you aren't using condoms.

Tips for a great relationship



Feeling sexy

Sex can be an important part of relationships, but worrying about HIV might leave you feeling unsexy.



Some people find that their medication affects their mood or changes their appearance – making them feel less in the mood for sex.



Talking to your partner about how you feel can help you find ways to move through this together.

Relationships where you're both positive

✔ It's still important to use protection during sex – because you might have different strains of HIV.



✘ This can cause problems if one strain of HIV is resistant to certain antiretroviral drugs, making it harder for you to find treatment that works.



It's possible for mixed status couples to safely have an HIV-negative baby together.

Need more information? See our 'Getting pregnant & HIV' factsheet.



*Need more information?
See our 'Sex & HIV' factsheet.*

