



Dear Sexual and Reproductive Health Provider, your Female Patients living with HIV want you to know...

The Women's Collective obtained the following information about women living with HIV and what they need from their medical providers to help them address their SRH needs. This information is intended to help you meet the holistic needs of your patients and nurture your relationship with them.

- **Many women living with HIV need more than medicine to stay healthy.**
 - ***Why is this important?*** Many women are juggling multiple obligations, such as raising children, maintaining a home, and employment. Women with limited resources often choose to provide for their families before caring for themselves. You can help your patient maintain her health by supporting her access to social support services, such as food banks, shelters, and affordable housing.

- **Many women living with HIV want to remain sexually active.**
 - ***Why is this important?*** Many women living with HIV feel that they have been discouraged from being sexually active and morally judged for their desire to be sexual. As a result, many women simply conceal their sexual lives from their providers. This is a missed opportunity to inform women about safe sex practices, which are particularly important when HIV comes into play. You can encourage your patient to make safe sex decisions by educating her about the many safe sex tools available to her, such as the male and female condoms.

- **Many women living with HIV want to have children.**
 - ***Why is this important?*** Many women living with HIV assume that they cannot have healthy and happy babies because they do not know about available treatment to reduce the risk of vertical HIV transmission. As a result, many women forgo childbearing, which sometimes causes remorse, depression, and feelings of lost womanhood. Providers can support the reproductive health of their patients by reminding women living with HIV or AIDS about their childbearing options.

- **Many women living with HIV want you to connect with their other providers.**
 - ***Why is this important?*** Many women do not know how or whether their reproductive choices compromise their HIV treatment regimen and vice versa. Therefore, it is particularly important for you to connect with your patient's other providers to ensure her overall wellbeing.
- **Counseling Services are critical for newly diagnosed women.**
 - ***Why is this important?*** Many women report feelings of depression when first diagnosed with HIV. This depression often prevents them from seeking treatment. By referring newly diagnosed women to counseling services or providing counseling at the time of diagnosis, you can help women to access care quickly.
- **Stigma in the healthcare field bars many women from getting treatment.**
 - ***Why is this important?*** Many women living with HIV avoid the doctor's office and fail to collect medication for fear of being stigmatized by doctors, nurses, pharmacists, among others. You can help your patients maintain their health by ensuring compassion, tolerance, and non-discrimination in your office and modeling these behaviors among your peers.
- **Women living with HIV need to be informed about their treatment.**
 - ***Why is this important?*** Many women report feeling like guinea pigs or teaching tools for medical students because they have been excluded from conversations about their own bodies. These experiences foster distrust for the medical field, which erodes the patient-doctor relationship. In order to regain and/or safeguard your patient's trust, keep her informed about all the procedures and treatments being done, regardless of how routine they may be.
- **Women living with HIV want continuity in their providers.**
 - ***Why is this important?*** Many women express frustration with having to see a new provider each time they visit the doctor's office. This discontinuity precludes women from building a trusting relationship with their doctor. Ensuring that you see your patient each time she comes in for an appointment would help to cultivate greater trust with your patient.