

# Living with HIV: Patients Perspective

*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC - safer, healthier people.*

[Keith Rhoades] I think that one of the things that inhibits open dialogue between the patient and the doctor -- and I'm speaking from my own personal experience -- is the embarrassment and the stigma.

[Cynthia Jameson] Well, I think it makes a lot of people uncomfortable. They don't usually want to talk about things like that. It's -- it's hard to discuss, I think. So I guess you have to find ways to break the ice.

[Steve Hemraj] Initially, it's the doctor's responsibility. Later on, as you seek treatment and care and you've become -- like today, five years after being diagnosed -- it is a joint responsibility.

[Cynthia Jameson] I wanted to know everything I possibly could about the disease when I first found out, because anytime something's happening to me, I want to know everything I possibly can.

[Keith Rhoades] Doctors need to have an arsenal of information to provide to their patients.

[Cynthia Jameson] I think that -- that it's important for them to discuss prevention at every doctor's visit. I think it's important to let them know how important it is to not transmit the disease and to stay healthy.

[Keith Rhoades] One of the things, for myself, that I've wrestled with, as being an HIV-positive person, is trying to stay as healthy as possible. And when I first was diagnosed HIV-positive, my doctor said that, if you just stay HIV-positive and you take your medications, you're gonna live a healthy life. You don't want to complicate that with syphilis, hepatitis, gonorrhea, you know, all the other STDs that are out there. So, practicing safe sex has become even more important.

[Steve Hemraj] For me, for example, I have not had that kind of dialogue in the last year with my doctor about my sexual behavior, and I've had unprotected sex once. But my doctor assumes that because my CD4 and viral load is okay and I'm doing well, that my behavior is good. And I had to engage the doctor and say, doctor, I had unprotected sex once in the last six months, and I would like you to perform all these new STDs for me.

[Cynthia Jameson] I think just by the doctor being as open as they possibly can and being as honest as they possibly can, that's very helpful.

[Keith Rhoades] The most important thing and the most important person is myself and taking care of myself and being responsible for myself.

[Steve Hemraj] Accurate, good, persistent information changes behavior.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.*