

Menopause and HIV: What's the Connection?

Learn how menopause affects HIV risk



Women of all ages can get HIV — including those over 50

Older women are more likely than younger women to be diagnosed at a late stage of the disease — possibly because they don't know they're at risk.

Later diagnosis of the disease increases the risk of HIV-related illnesses and dying from the disease.

How might menopause affect HIV risk?

Women over 50 still have sex

In a recent study, 1 in 2 people over the age of 50 reported having sex in the last week. Since pregnancy is no longer an issue for post-menopausal women, they may not think about safe sex — or talk about it with their partners or providers.

This means women may be less likely to use condoms to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections after menopause. But women in peri- and post-menopause may be extra vulnerable to HIV infection. Hormonal changes can cause vaginal thinning and dryness, leaving vaginal tissue prone to tearing — which increases the risk of HIV entering the body during sex.

Some older women (and their healthcare providers) chalk health changes up to menopause when they could be something else

For example, night sweats are a classic menopause symptom — but they're also common in people with HIV.

1 in 4 people living with HIV in the United States is a woman.

Preventing HIV through menopause and beyond

You're never too old to protect yourself from HIV. Start with these proactive steps:



Use a condom if you're not sure about your partner's HIV status.



Get tested for HIV.



Ask your HCP about PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), medication that can prevent HIV.

More than 1 in 2 new HIV diagnoses are in people above age 50.