HIV is a complex virus that affects more than just your physical health.

Physical health
HIV has different symptoms based on the stage of infection.

The 3 stages of HIV infection are:
- Acute
- Chronic
- Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)

Adults who live with chronic inflammation from HIV for a long time are at higher risk for:
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Renal disease
- Osteoporosis
- AIDS

If you don’t take medicine, HIV will advance to AIDS, which can be fatal.

Other ways HIV can affect you
Stigma and discrimination can make people feel isolated and lonely.

Stigma = a negative attitude or belief toward people living with HIV
Discrimination = when people with HIV are treated differently than those without HIV

Relationships
- Sharing your HIV status with previous and current sexual partners can be very emotional and difficult
- HIV can cause you to lose relationships when you share your status or when loved ones die from AIDS or AIDS-related complications

Employment
- Stigma and discrimination may lead to loss of employment
- People with HIV may worry about loss of employment
- HIV can affect physical health and cause changes in your ability to perform at work

Mental health
A diagnosis of HIV can impact your sense of well-being.

- Facing a lifelong illness can cause overwhelming emotions
- Sharing your HIV status with friends, family and others in your life can be emotional
- Hiding your status from others can increase feelings of isolation

People with HIV have higher rates of mood, anxiety and cognitive disorders.
- Depression is one of the most common conditions in people with HIV.

In a 2022 survey conducted by HealthyWomen and the National Caucus and Center on Black Aging (NCBA):
- Almost half of the respondents did not know that antiretroviral therapy (ART) and early diagnosis can help people live with HIV for many years.
- Only half of the respondents knew that half of the people with diagnosed HIV in the U.S. are 50 years old or older.
- Less than half (44%) of survey respondents felt they were knowledgeable about HIV transmission, prevention and treatment.

If you are living with HIV, you can care for yourself by:
- Taking your medication
- Finding a support system
- Avoiding smoking
- Exercising regularly
- Eating a healthy, balanced diet
- Reducing stigma by talking openly about HIV

Support groups, toll-free hotlines, mental health providers and HIV healthcare providers can help you get important information and advice related to living with HIV.