



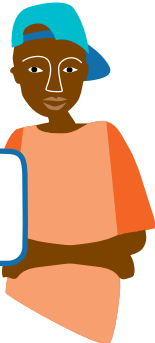
**Telling others  
about my  
HIV status**



This leaflet is to help you think about telling other people you are living with HIV. For many young people born with HIV, their HIV diagnosis may not have been shared with anyone outside their immediate family. For others who get HIV later in life, it is something they discover for themselves and may want to share with their family, friends and partners.

Remember, it is your right to keep information about your HIV status to yourself or to share it with others. As a young person it is important that you are in control of this process and feel supported to think about who you tell, when and how it is done. Ultimately, this is your information and not for someone else to share. You do NOT have to share.

Some people find it easy to tell others that they have HIV and others may find it very difficult and emotional. You may feel fearful, embarrassed, excited or relieved. It may get easier once you begin to tell others, but you cannot be sure how each person will react and what impact it might have.



AFTER SHARING I FELT  
PROUD THAT I HAD DONE  
IT AND THAT IT WILL HELP  
OTHERS LIKE ME.  
YOUNG PERSON, ZIMBABWE

## Telling others ...

DO I FEEL STRONG ENOUGH IF THERE IS A BAD REACTION?

DO I HAVE TO TELL MY SISTERS? THEY WILL BE SO UPSET.

HELP! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

WHAT IF THEY GET ANGRY WITH ME OR START CRYING?

WILL THEY HAVE UP-TO-DATE FACTS ABOUT HIV?

WHO DO I ASK IF I NEED SOME SUPPORT?

DO OTHER PEOPLE WITH HIV HAVE THESE PROBLEMS?



Sharing with others can bring comfort and support but it can also bring a lot of questions and at times stigma and rejection.

## Feel confident

Before you think about telling somebody, take time to feel confident yourself about living with HIV. You will need to be strong in your own identity in order to manage the reactions of others.

## Think about who you want to tell and why

It is likely that the people you consider sharing with are going to be close and special people like family, friends or partners. These are important people so their response will matter and that can make the process more stressful.

Think about how you can prepare for telling someone. You could test out people's opinions, reactions and potential consequences by talking to people about HIV. Then you would see what kind of knowledge and opinions people have on HIV and how they react.

Remember, you won't know how someone else will react to this information so be prepared for different outcomes. What if they say nothing? What if they get angry or sad? Think about whether you are ready for these different reactions. Remember, you are not responsible for how they feel.

## Think about where and when you will share

You could think about:

- somewhere you feel safe
- somewhere they will be able to be open and honest
- a place where you can get support afterwards
- taking someone else with you when you tell them.

Remember, once you have shared that information it can't be taken back. Think about what you would like to happen and tell that to the person. You can explain that you are sharing something very personal and that their reaction may not be what either of you expect or want, but in telling them you are asking for their support by keeping it confidential.

## Give them some information about HIV



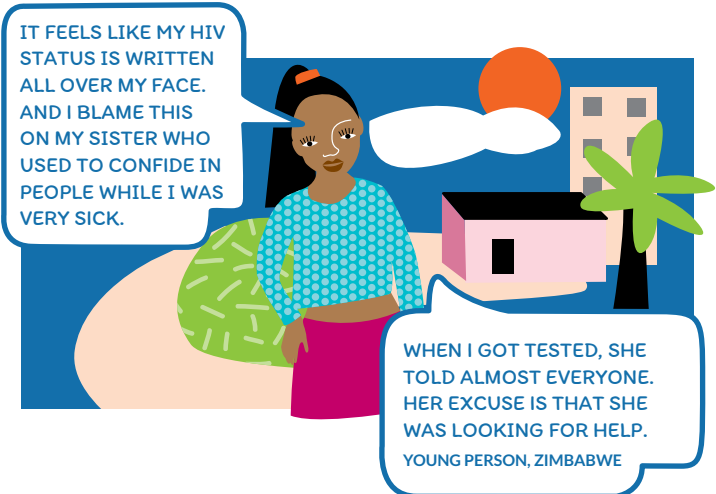
Don't forget to tell the person the facts – the things you have learnt about HIV.

Taking antiretroviral treatment (ART) means that people with HIV can now live a long and fulfilled life, can have relationships, marry, have children, work just like anyone else. Adhering to the medication can make the virus undetectable, meaning we are not able to pass on the virus to anyone else.

**Undetectable = Untransmittable**

Answering people's questions can be difficult so think about any information and leaflets you can give them that will help them understand more about HIV.

No one can predict how another person will react, but we know that some people's ignorance and fear can lead them to be unkind and sometimes destructive, for example by sharing your information with others without your permission. We hope this will not happen, but it is something you need to consider.

An illustration of a young woman with dark skin and black hair tied back, wearing a blue patterned top and a pink skirt. She is standing in a stylized outdoor setting with a blue sky, a red sun, a white cloud, a pink house, and a green palm tree. A large speech bubble points to her face.

IT FEELS LIKE MY HIV STATUS IS WRITTEN ALL OVER MY FACE. AND I BLAME THIS ON MY SISTER WHO USED TO CONFIDE IN PEOPLE WHILE I WAS VERY SICK.

WHEN I GOT TESTED, SHE TOLD ALMOST EVERYONE. HER EXCUSE IS THAT SHE WAS LOOKING FOR HELP.  
YOUNG PERSON, ZIMBABWE

## Telling others ...

HOW DO I TELL MY GIRLFRIEND? WHAT IF SHE REJECTS ME?

DO I HAVE TO TELL EVERYONE AT SCHOOL?

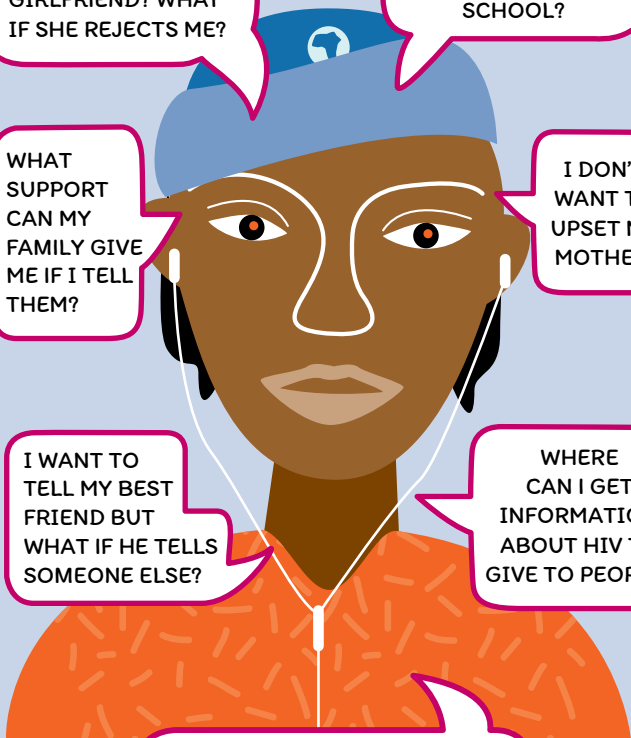
WHAT SUPPORT CAN MY FAMILY GIVE ME IF I TELL THEM?

I DON'T WANT TO UPSET MY MOTHER.

I WANT TO TELL MY BEST FRIEND BUT WHAT IF HE TELLS SOMEONE ELSE?

WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION ABOUT HIV TO GIVE TO PEOPLE?

I CAN'T BE THE ONLY PERSON GOING THROUGH THIS!



## What do I say?

Finding the words is not always easy. There really is no right way, but you can practise so that you feel more confident in what you want to say. Try out role plays in a support group or practise with a friend or family member who already knows. Ask them to say what helped, what are good words to use.

Most people who have shared their status can tell you about experiences that were both positive and negative. You can talk to people in your support group or with CATS and other peer supporters and hear their experiences.

Remember, you do not have to tell others. There should be no expectations or pressure on you to share in order to be part of the movement of young people living with HIV. You can advocate and support others without having to be public about your status. Do what is comfortable for you.



MY FAMILY WAS VERY  
CONFIDENTIAL AND MANAGED TO  
KEEP IT AMONG CLOSE TRUSTED  
FAMILY MEMBERS.  
YOUNG PERSON, ZIMBABWE



READY+ aims to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), psychological wellbeing, care and treatment with, by and for 30,000 adolescents and young people living with HIV in Mozambique, eSwatini, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The programme is being implemented by an innovative and multi-disciplinary consortium of youth, SRHR, HIV and communication partners. READY+ is one of a portfolio of projects being implemented under the READY programme.

For more information, visit:

<https://frontlineaids.org/our-work-includes/ready/>