

Hello @ntario.info



# DID YOU KNOW...

There are around 20,000 people living with HIV in Ontario.

We now know more about HIV than we ever have. We know that if you are diagnosed, connected to care and start HIV treatment early, you can have a long, healthy, full life. We also know that HIV treatment and maintaining an undetectable viral load (the amount of the virus in the blood) is not only great for your health but also makes it unlikely that the virus can be passed on. We also have more tools than ever before to prevent the transmission of HIV.

In Ontario, there is a system of prevention, testing, care and support. There are many programs and resources to respond to HIV in the province. **HelloOntario.info** is a resource that is here to help you get connected. It is important to know where you can find the information and help you need. If you or someone you know is living with HIV/AIDS, this resource is here to provide you with basic information about HIV and AIDS, and to point you in the right direction for treatment, support and care services.



# KNOW THE FACTS



There are three ways HIV can be passed (transmitted) from one person to another:

1. Sexual transmission (the most common way is through "condomless" vaginal or anal sex)
2. Blood transmission (shared needles or other drug equipment)
3. Perinatal or vertical transmission (formerly referred to as "mother-to-child transmission"). HIV can be transmitted during pregnancy, labour, delivery, or through breast milk.

There are only five fluids in the body that contain enough HIV to infect someone. These are:

1. Blood
2. Semen (including pre-cum/pre-ejaculatory fluid)
3. Anal (or rectal) fluid
4. Vaginal fluid
5. Breast milk

You can have HIV and not know it. The only way to know for sure is by getting tested. HIV testing is available for free in Ontario. Contact the **AIDS & Sexual Health InfoLine** to find out where to get tested.

# WILL MY HIV STATUS AFFECT MY APPLICATION TO LIVE IN CANADA?

---

People living with HIV/AIDS have the same rights as all other people in Canada. Do not assume that your HIV status will prevent you from being granted the status you seek in Canada. In the case of refugees, it may even make their refugee claims stronger. Speak to a lawyer as soon as you can about your HIV status and how it may or may not impact your application to live in Canada – they are required by law to keep everything you say confidential.



# SETTLEMENT AND LEGAL SERVICES



## SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Settlement services help newcomers settle and adjust to their new life in Ontario, offering services such as:

- Interpretation and translation of documents
- Help filling out forms and applications
- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Help finding a job or training
- Information about other community services, schools, and health care

**Important:** These services are often free, and always confidential.

## LEGAL SERVICES

The **HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)** is a charitable not-for-profit community-based legal clinic that provides free legal services for people living with HIV/AIDS who live in Ontario.



# HEALTH CARE

If you are new to Ontario, you can access health care through your private insurance, the **Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP)**, the **Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)**, or the **Ontario Temporary Health Program**, depending on your immigration status (e.g., immigrant, refugee, student, temporary worker, or visitor). If you are not entitled to public health care coverage, you may be able to access health care by going to a community health centre free of charge.

**Important:** If you need urgent medical care, you can go to a hospital emergency room. A hospital is required to admit you if your life is endangered. If you do not have an OHIP card, you will get a bill for the services provided by the hospital. If you cannot pay the bill, speak with your worker at your local AIDS service organization (ASO) or a lawyer. Do not let the prospect of a bill prevent you from going to a hospital emergency room if you are in need of urgent medical care.

# ACCESSING MEDICATION FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV



- People with HIV live longer, healthier lives if they take HIV treatments as soon as they can after learning they have HIV.
- HIV treatments today are much easier to take and have fewer side-effects.

HIV medication is not free in Ontario. Finding a program to pay for HIV medication can take some time. As a person who is new to Ontario, you may not yet qualify for health care services and insurance. If you do not have an insurance plan to cover the cost of HIV medication, you can apply for government financial support programs that can help you pay for medication. Get help from your local community health centre, settlement agency, or AIDS service organization (ASO) to find out what financial support program you are eligible to apply to. A support worker at one of these organizations can help you fill out the paperwork and apply.

# FINDING A GOOD DOCTOR

In Ontario, there is high quality HIV medical care available. But, not just any doctor or nurse can provide the high quality care that you need and have a right to. To find high quality HIV care contact your local AIDS service organization (ASO) or community health centre. You can also contact **Health Care Connect**.

In some cases, the care is provided by a person who specializes in treating infections like HIV. To access their services you need a referral from a family doctor.

**Important:** In Ontario, health care is confidential under the Personal Health Information Act. Doctors are required by law to maintain patient confidentiality. If you want to learn more about service providers' privacy and confidentiality policies, do not be afraid to ask them directly.





# HIV PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



There are a number of social programs and services available for people living with HIV/AIDS in Ontario. Many of these programs and services are provided through AIDS service organizations (ASOs) and other community organizations. Services and resources include:

- Counselling and support (for mental health and emotional wellness)
- Financial advice and employment
- Food and day-to-day living
- Harm reduction (for people who use drugs and other substances - provision of safer drug use supplies)
- Sexual health (e.g., counselling, free condoms and lubricant, referrals)
- Housing referrals
- Legal support and referrals
- HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing

**Important:** HIV services in Ontario are confidential. What you discuss with your counsellor is between you and them. Ask about the agency's privacy and confidentiality policies when making an appointment.

# KEY CONTACTS

Find more detailed information related to **HIV/AIDS for newcomers** to Ontario by going to:  
**HelloOntario.info**

Through the **AIDS & Sexual Health InfoLine**, you can access trained counsellors you can talk to about sexual health, including HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexuality, sexual orientation, relationship concerns, etc. You can even get **referrals** to appropriate **clinics and community agencies** [e.g., AIDS service organization (ASO)] and HIV programs, or information about **where to get tested for HIV** across Ontario. This service is free and anonymous.

## **AIDS & Sexual Health InfoLine**

**Tel:** 416-392-2437

**Toll-free in Ontario:** 1-800-668-2437

**Web:** [goo.gl/j8cfoK](http://goo.gl/j8cfoK)

## **Hours of operation**

Monday to Friday: 10:00 am - 10:30 pm

Saturday & Sunday: 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

French speaking counsellors available: Monday to Friday: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Closed on statutory holidays

To find an **ASO, community health centre, HIV program** or **settlement agency** near you, you can also call:

## **211Ontario**

**Tel:** 211 or 416-397-4636

**Note:** Service in over 100 languages

**Web:** [goo.gl/NVDgrf](http://goo.gl/NVDgrf)

## **Hours of operation**

Monday to Sunday: 24 hours a day

To find a **community health centre** near you, you can also call:

## **ServiceOntario INFOline**

**Tel:** 416-314-5518

**Toll-free:** 1-866-532-3161

**Web:** [goo.gl/Bj9aQ9](http://goo.gl/Bj9aQ9)

## **Hours of operation**

Monday to Friday: 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

# KEY CONTACTS

To find a doctor or a nurse practitioner, contact:

**Health Care Connect**

**Toll-free:** 1-800-445-1822

**Web:** [goo.gl/C2uG7p](http://goo.gl/C2uG7p)

**Hours of operation**

Monday to Friday: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

If you are living with HIV and need legal assistance, including help accessing health care or medication, contact:

**HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)**

**Tel:** 416-340-7790

**Toll-free in Ontario:** 1-888-705-8889

**Web:** [goo.gl/xavfEk](http://goo.gl/xavfEk)

**Hours of operation**

Monday to Friday: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

For new inquiries: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

This pocket guide is part of **HelloOntario.info**, which is a web-based resource about HIV and related services for people who are new to Ontario. It was created by the African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO), the Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment (CAAT), the Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance (GMSH) and the Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative (WHAI). The resource connects you to information about HIV, settlement and legal services, health care services and medication access, social programs and services, and more.

The development of **HelloOntario.info** was funded by the AIDS Bureau, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (Ontario).



Hello ntario.info