



Pueblo  
Community  
Health Center



# Early Intervention Services

[www.PuebloCHC.org](http://www.PuebloCHC.org)

## **What is EIS?**

EIS stands for Early Intervention Services. It is a Pueblo Community Health Center (PCHC) program to care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Comprehensive case management services within the EIS Program include the following:

- Physician who is an HIV specialist
- Medical assistant and nurse case managers
- Pharmaceutical services
- Oral health care
- Behavioral health care
- Referrals to medical specialty providers
- Medication therapy adherence counseling
- Outpatient substance abuse counseling
- Other services as available

## **What is HIV?**

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks a part of the body called the immune system, which is the body's defense system against germs. When HIV infects your body, it starts to weaken your immune system, making it harder for your body to fight off other infections and illnesses. Without treatment, it can lead to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

## **What does an HIV diagnosis mean?**

It can be scary to learn that you are HIV-positive and infected with the virus. There is not a cure for HIV, but with the right treatment and care, people with HIV can live long, full lives, protect their partners, and manage the virus effectively.

## **How is HIV transmitted?**

HIV spreads from person to person through oral, anal, or vaginal sex, sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment or accidental needle sticks (which is rare). Certain bodily fluids can transmit HIV such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or an infected mother's breast milk. The virus can enter the body through an open cut, sore on your skin, or through mucous membranes. These membranes are found in the penis, vagina, anus, rectum, mouth, nose, and eyes. Women infected with HIV can pass the infection to their baby during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is not recommended for women infected with HIV.

## **What is AIDS?**

AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is the most serious stage of HIV that occurs when a person's immune system becomes so damaged that the body is less able to fight infections and diseases. People with AIDS can get very sick from illnesses that would not normally be an issue for someone with a healthy immune system. These infections are also called opportunistic infections.

## **Will I develop AIDS now that I am HIV positive?**

Not everyone infected with HIV will develop AIDS. There are people who have been HIV positive for more than 20 years and have not had any serious AIDS-related illnesses. Untreated, almost all cases of HIV will progress into AIDS. The progression varies from person to person and depends on other factors, including general health status and lifestyle choices such as alcohol, tobacco, or drug use. Consistently taking prescribed HIV medications can prevent progression to this stage.

## **What if I get AIDS?**

AIDS is an indication that your CD4 count is below 200 and your immune system is severely weakened. If your immune system is damaged, it is not protecting you from other types of infections and conditions, such as pneumonia, and certain cancers that your body can normally fight off. AIDS can lead to a range of symptoms and complications that can impact a person's quality of life. Treatment for AIDS is antiretroviral therapy and treatment for other infections or conditions that have developed.

## **When will I need to take medications?**

HIV medications are prescribed for all patients diagnosed with HIV as soon as lab test results for genotype are received by your doctor. You will need to take medications indefinitely.

## **What is adherence?**

Adherence refers to how closely you follow a prescribed treatment regimen. This includes medications, lab tests, and appointments.

Adherence includes taking your HIV medications 100% of the time. Even missing one dose can allow the virus to reproduce more rapidly and change or mutate. This could leave you with fewer treatment options. Studies have shown that your first medication regimen has the best chance for long-term success. Medications need to be taken the same time of the day. If you miss a dose by a few hours, you can take it, but you may have to double-up. Specific medication questions can be answered by your doctor or case manager. If you are having problems staying on a medication schedule, you can set an alarm or cell phone alert, keep a medication diary, and/or have friends or family members help remind you. If you are experiencing side effects, you can ask your doctor or case manager for advice about controlling them.

If you have just started medications, it is important to know that during the first 2-4 weeks, you may experience side effects that usually improve slowly. If you go to the hospital or are incarcerated, you may need to supply your own medications for at least the first few days, so be prepared for such a situation. Remember to order your medications with time to spare and keep your insurance and other coverage current.

## **Is HIV/AIDS different in older people?**

Almost 53% of all people infected with HIV/AIDS in the United States are age 50 and older. Older adults may be coping with other diseases and challenges related to aging, such as heart disease, diabetes, bone loss, and cognitive impairment. As HIV/AIDS progresses, older people will need help with mobility and caring for themselves. They will need support and understanding from their doctors, family, and friends.

## **During pregnancy, should I take HIV medication(s)?**

Continue your HIV medications during pregnancy. It is important to review your medications with your doctor. You will likely be referred to CHIP (Children's Hospital Immunodeficiency Program) in Denver. If you do not take HIV medications currently, you will be started on HIV medications to protect your baby. HIV medications will reduce the amount of HIV infection in the mother's body and reduce the risk of passing HIV to the unborn baby. It is important for you to see your doctor so that the correct medications can be started by the second trimester. During labor and delivery, HIV medications will be given to you by intravenous infusion and orally. If you continue treatment and have an undetectable viral load, your risk of passing HIV to your baby is less than 1%.

## **After the baby is born, will the baby need to be on HIV medication?**

Yes. The baby will be tested for HIV and prescribed oral liquid HIV medication for 6 weeks.

## **What is a viral load?**

When someone has HIV, the virus multiplies and spreads throughout their body. A viral load test shows how much active HIV is in your blood and how well the treatment is working. A low viral load means HIV is less likely to make you sick. An undetectable viral load means that your viral load is below the level that the test can measure. Even if your level is undetectable, there is still a small amount of virus in your body, and you still have HIV. The goal is to keep your viral load as low as possible and keep your CD4 count as high as possible.

## **What is CD4?**

CD4 cells (also known as T-cells) are part of the immune system that helps your body fight off viruses and bacteria before they make you sick. Evaluating the number of CD4 cells that are in your body helps doctors see how strong the person's immune system is and how well the body is fighting off the virus.

## **What does viral mutation mean?**

An HIV "mutation" is just a slight change in a specific section of HIV's RNA, the genetic code that provides all the instructions for how HIV works. Mutations occur naturally, not just in HIV, but in other viruses as well.

## **How often do I need to have lab tests drawn?**

Routine lab tests are done every 3 months or more often as needed.

If you are not taking HIV medications, your immune system needs to be monitored to make sure that it remains at a healthy level. If you are taking HIV medications, labs are important to check the effectiveness of your medications and that there are no adverse effects related to the medications or HIV.

- CD4 (every 3-6 months) and viral load (every 3-6 months) tests provide a snapshot of your immune function, and the amount of virus present in your body. If your viral load is elevated while on medications or you are a new patient, a genotype or phenotype may be done to check which medications are best for you.
- CBC (every 3-6 months) is a “complete blood count” that evaluates for anemia, infection, and other conditions.
- CMP (every 3-6 months) is a “complete metabolic panel” that includes a blood sugar test and tests that monitor kidney and liver functions.
- Other required annual tests are lipids testing, syphilis testing, TB testing (every 2 years), and hepatitis C testing (every 5 years).

Your provider may repeat tests and/or run other tests if you are experiencing health issues or lab results are abnormal.

## **What is an opportunistic infection and how can I protect myself from getting one?**

Opportunistic infections are infections that your body can no longer fight because HIV has destroyed too many CD4 cells. To prevent these infections, you will be placed on antibiotics that you will take daily until your blood work indicates it is safe to discontinue. Research indicates that the following precautions will help you avoid contracting an opportunistic infection: thorough hand washing, avoiding people who are ill, sharing food utensils and cups, cleaning litter boxes (cat feces), and soil gardening. Safe sex should be practiced, and medications should be taken as prescribed.

## **What if I also have Hepatitis C?**

Since Hepatitis C is transmitted the same way as HIV, it is common for patients with HIV to be co-infected. There are treatments for certain types of Hepatitis C that can provide a cure (depending if the patient is a candidate).

## **What does my case manager do for me?**

An intake appointment is scheduled with your case manager when you initially become a PCHC EIS patient. You will be provided with direct contact information so you can reach your case manager when needed during office hours. Your case manager provides many services for you, including scheduling all your appointments, assisting with medication adherence, helping you access supportive resources (such as behavioral health, dental, dietary, specialty care, etc.) They answer questions about

any aspect of your care and talk to you about risk reductions, safe sex practices, and other relevant topics for managing your health.

Contact your case manager first if you need to make or reschedule an appointment (a minimum of 48 hours' notice should be given when possible). If your case manager is not available, you may call 719-543-8711 and ask to speak with triage. It is important that you tell the triage nurse that you are an EIS patient. Although PCHC staff members may remind you of upcoming appointment(s), it is your responsibility to know when your appointments are. If you cancel an appointment, care may be delayed if immediate appointments are not available. If you do not show up for your appointment, your case manager will contact you. Please keep your address and phone number current.

### **Why and how often do I need to see my case manager?**

You should see your case manager every time you see your doctor, and as needed based upon your level of care. Case managers are your individual resources for making sure your health care needs are met. They can also help you find other resources in the community.

### **What does medication resistance mean?**

HIV medication resistance means a reduction in the ability of a medication, or combination of medications, to block HIV reproduction in the body. Medication resistance occurs because of changes or mutations in HIV's genetic structure. Mutations can be common in the HIV virus if medications are not taken consistently. HIV reproduces at an extremely rapid rate and does not contain the proteins needed to correct the mistakes it makes during copying. (Source: [www.hivworkshop.com/drug\\_resistance.htm](http://www.hivworkshop.com/drug_resistance.htm))

### **What do I do if the medications make me sick?**

HIV medications, also known as antiretroviral therapy (ART), are generally safe and effective in controlling the virus and preventing the progression of HIV. However, they can sometimes cause side effects. You will be educated on the most common side effects by your physician and/or case manager when the medication is prescribed. Common side effects of HIV medication include:

**Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea or Stomach Upset:** You may experience nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or other gastrointestinal symptoms when you first start taking HIV medications. This side effect usually improves over time as the body adjusts to the medication. Drinking the recommended amount of water and eating a balanced diet can help manage these symptoms. If you have repeated episodes of vomiting and/or diarrhea over 24 hours, notify your case manager or physician.

***Fatigue or Weakness:*** Feeling tired or weak is a common side effect of HIV medication, especially during the first few weeks of treatment. This side effect often improves as the body gets used to the medication. This can also be caused by stress, lack of sleep, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, depression, or lack of exercise.

***Headaches:*** You may experience headaches or migraines while taking HIV medications. These symptoms are usually mild and can often be relieved with over-the-counter pain relievers.

***Fever and flu-like symptoms*** such as aches, pains, and mild fever (less than 100 degrees) may be due to HIV medications. These symptoms may also be caused from HIV itself.

Notify your case manager if any questions regarding your new medications or possible side effects. Your case manager will be contacting you within 2 weeks after you start any new medication to ensure that you are not having any problems.

### **What do I do if I run out of my medications?**

You should not run out. Make sure to order your medication refills at least 5 days before your prescription is to be filled (2 weeks for mail order). Factor in weekends, holidays, and trips you are taking. Your medication should not be an emergency, and most pharmacies will not treat them as such, especially mail order. Contact your pharmacy first for refills. If you are out of refills, ask the pharmacy to send your doctor a refill request. If you experience a problem getting your medications, call your case manager.

### **What is ADAP?**

ADAP is the AIDS Drug Assistance Program that provides medications at low or no cost to people with HIV/AIDS that do not have adequate prescription drug coverage. Individuals must meet certain income guidelines to qualify for assistance. Participants are eligible to apply every 12 months. HIAP is a program to help those that qualify with private insurance. SWAP is a program to help those with Medicaid/Health First Colorado.

If you have questions regarding your Med D plan you may contact Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment at 877-640-0006. For Medicaid or other questions, please contact PCHC registration at 719-543-8711. Remember to keep your registration current.

### **How often do I need to see my doctor?**

You need to see your doctor on a regular basis—usually every 3-4 months to help you with the treatment of your disease, explain the importance of your medications, and to review lab results.

## **Who do I see if my doctor is not in clinic or if I get sick after clinic hours?**

If you are sick, call your case manager at 719-543-8711. If you cannot reach your case manager, the receptionist will either (depending on your symptoms) schedule an appointment with another health care provider in the clinic or transfer your call to triage. The triage nurse/MA will further assist you in making an appointment with another health care provider in the clinic or direct your care to the emergency room if your symptoms indicate it.

If you need assistance **after clinic hours**, call 719-543-8711. An on-call nurse will be available to triage and assist you with your immediate or urgent medical need.

## **When should I see a dentist?**

You should see the dentist at least once per year. You may also need to see the dentist if you develop any symptoms of infections, sores, bleeding gums, or dental pain. PCHC offers oral health care services at two locations, O'Rourke Dental Clinic and East Side Clinic. Your case manager can refer you to dental care or you may call 719-564-4823 and ask for a dental appointment.

## **When should I see a behavioral health therapist?**

You should see a behavioral health therapist if you require assistance with depression, anxiety, or other concerns. You should also consider seeing a therapist if your doctor or case manager suggests it. PCHC offers behavioral health care services. Your physician or case manager can initiate the referral to behavioral health.

## **What happens if I must go to the hospital?**

During your EIS intake appointment, you will receive a card directing the hospital to contact PCHC if you are in the ER or if you are admitted to the hospital. Unfortunately, this system is not perfect, please call your case manager so they can collaborate with your doctor at the hospital. Take your medications with you in case the hospital does not have your medication available. It is also important for the doctors to see which medication you take. If you are admitted into the hospital, the hospital's doctors will direct your care. Do not stop your medications before consulting with PCHC's EIS doctor and/or case managers.

## **What can I do if I have a drug or alcohol problem?**

Alcohol and drug use can cause problems for anyone, but patients with HIV are a much greater risk for complications. These substances could interact with your medications or interfere with their effectiveness. If you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you might forget (or refuse) to have your medications, which leads to illness or resistance. When impaired, there is a greater risk of unsafe sex, even by the most well-meaning people.



Drug and alcohol abuse is a serious health problem and there is treatment available. Please tell your case manager if this is an issue for you. Your case manager can refer you to out-patient treatment through PCHC's Behavioral Health team or another location of your choice. If in-patient treatment is required, the Southern Colorado Health Network may be able to assist you.

### **How can I reduce my risk of passing this infection to someone else?**

Always inform your partner that you have HIV prior to sexual activity. Practice safe sex by using a condom for vaginal or anal sex. Use a condom or dental dam if you are having oral sex. These products are available free of charge from your case manager.

Ask about PrEP (a preventative medication) for your partner.

### **EIS Patient Group**

Pueblo Community Health Center's Consumer Advisory Council's mission is to improve health care outcomes for EIS patients. This is done by working with PCHC staff and other HIV service providers to advocate for quality care, identify and address opportunities for improvement, and actively participate in HIV awareness and outreach in the community.

Consumer Advisory Council meets every month at one of the clinic sites. This group consists of consumers and service providers who work with the HIV positive community. World AIDS Day and Pueblo Pride are the two primary events in which they participate. Members also help develop the patient survey and identify areas of improvement.

For specific details about day, time, and meeting location of the group, please contact your case manager.

### **What can I do to be healthier with HIV/AIDS?**

- Take your medication(s) as prescribed. If you have any problems, please contact your case manager.
- See your case manager, physician, dentist, dietician, and/or behavioral health therapist when scheduled.
- Participate actively in your health care.
- Stay up to date with your health care maintenance exam and immunizations.
- If you use tobacco, stop. Discuss smoking cessation with your case manager, behavioral health therapist, and/or physician.
- If you use drugs, stop. Discuss drug rehabilitation services with your case manager, behavioral health therapist, and/or physician.
- If you use alcohol, stop. Discuss alcohol rehabilitation services with your case manager, behavioral health therapist, and/or physician.
- Practice safe sex.

### **Other valuable information:**

- PCHC offers FREE HIV testing for partners or anyone who wants to be tested. This is done on a walk-in basis and is available at all PCHC locations.
- IV drug users should ask their case manager for information on syringe/needle exchange program availability.
- Research opportunities are available. To learn about HIV-related clinical research trials or other opportunities, see below:

For Centers for Disease Control contact information, call the AIDS Clinical Trials Information Service at 1-800-HIV-0440. You may also visit [www.aidsinfo.nih.gov](http://www.aidsinfo.nih.gov) or [clinicaltrials.gov](http://clinicaltrials.gov) for local/regional clinical trial information.

### **Are there other agencies in the community to help me receive goods and services I may need?**

Yes, there are several entities in the Southeastern Colorado region to assist people with HIV/AIDS. The following list is not all-encompassing, but is a good place to start when learning about available resources:

ADAP-AIDS Drug Assistance Program or Ramsell	877-640-0006
Centers for Disabilities in Pueblo	719-546-1271
CHIP (for pregnancies through Children's Hospital)	720-777-8233
HOPE (Healthier Options for the Parenting Experience)	720-777-8233
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/hiv">www.cdc.gov/hiv</a>
Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment	719-583-4300
Hepatitis C Connection	877-435-7443
HIV/AIDS Education and Resources	<a href="http://www.TheBody.com">www.TheBody.com</a>
Medicaid Application Status	800-359-1991
Medicaid Customer Service	800-221-3943
News and Resources	<a href="http://www.POZ.com">www.POZ.com</a>
Posada Homeless Services	719-545-8776
Pueblo Department of Social Services	719-583-6160
Pueblo Social Security	719-545-9248
SCHN (Southern CO Health Network)	Pueblo: 719-924-892 719-225-8682 Colorado Springs: 800-241-5468
SDAP (State Drug Assistance Program)	303-692-2000
Southern Colorado Harm Reduction	719-289-7149





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**East Side Clinic & Pharmacy**

1301 East 7th Street  
Pueblo, Colorado 81001

**Colorado Avenue Clinic**

300 Colorado Avenue  
Pueblo, Colorado 81004



This booklet is designed to be a resource for Pueblo Community Health Center's Early Intervention Services Program patients. It is not all-inclusive and should be used as a guide for navigating various systems and services within the health care environment.

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