

Newly diagnosed:

a guide



I've just been diagnosed with HIV.

Where to from here?

Take a deep breath...

HIV is much like any chronic condition and you can still have a full life ahead of you.

Give yourself some time to process this news as it can seem scary at first.



Access support, care and treatment.

The sooner you can do this, the less impact HIV will have on your body and life.



Here is the **step by step.**



What is HIV?

HIV stands for **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**.

This virus attacks the immune system of your body, so you become more at risk of other infections and diseases.

While HIV cannot be cured, there is **very effective medication**. This medication reduces the amount of HIV in your body to minimise the impact on your immune system so you can stay well.

Treatment also reduces your risk of passing HIV onto sexual partners and live a normal life.

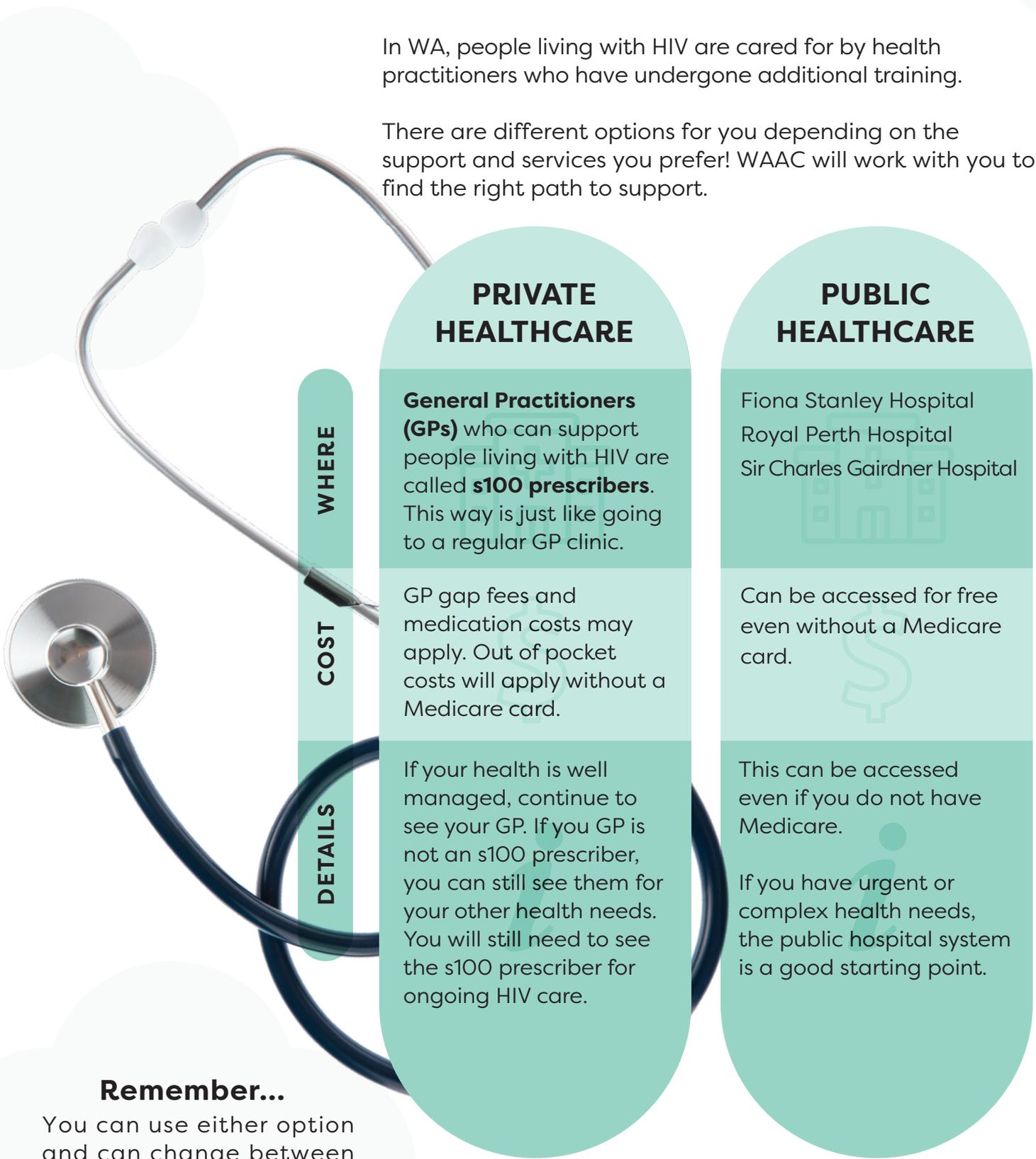


The next step:

Seeing a specialist

In WA, people living with HIV are cared for by health practitioners who have undergone additional training.

There are different options for you depending on the support and services you prefer! WAAC will work with you to find the right path to support.



Remember...

You can use either option and can change between them too.

What happens after your diagnosis?

Initial appointment

If you choose to go **public**, the hospital will contact you within 48 hours from referral and you will be invited to have a chat with a Nurse. You can ask any questions you have and discuss treatment options.



If you choose to go **private**, your provider can suggest s100 prescribers that you can book in with. You can then attend the s100 prescriber as you normally would with a GP.

Additional blood tests are completed to better understand your health. These tests will give the doctor or nurse everything they need to make a treatment plan for you.

Medication may be started on this day or at the following appointment.

The following week



During this appointment the team will go through your blood test results and discuss your **treatment plan**. If there are any other infections detected in your blood tests, they will discuss a plan for these at this time too.

Medication can be started from this appointment.

Follow up



Once started on medication, your team will stay in touch to discuss any side effects or symptoms. The team know this can be a stressful time and are available to offer support and answer any questions.

After the first month



Your viral load (the amount of virus in your blood) is tested after the first month. This is what the medication works on reducing.

Lots of people feel reassured when they see their first undetectable viral load, which means the virus will have much less impact on their body.

Medication works very quickly.

Ongoing care



Medication must be taken as prescribed to ensure it works. You will have bloods taken and receive medication at each visit, which is between **every 3 to 6 months**.

Once you are on treatment with an **undetectable viral load**, living with HIV is much like any other chronic health condition that requires medication

You are not alone

At any point after your diagnosis, WAAC can help you to access additional support such as:

- counselling
- social support
- peer support
- legal support
- case management



Frequently asked questions:



U=U

What is an undetectable viral load?

Taking your HIV medication as prescribed will reduce the viral load to low levels. The lower the viral load, the less impact HIV has on the body. Once you have an undetectable viral load for six months, you will be unable to pass on HIV through sexual contact.

This is called U=U (undetectable = untransmissible).

Can I have sex?

Yes! However, by law you must take reasonable precautions to ensure you are not putting another person at risk of acquiring HIV. This can include using condoms, have an undetectable viral load or your HIV negative partner(s) using PrEP as prescribed.

Should I tell my partner?

This is a very personal decision and depends on the relationship and whether you trust your partner not to tell anyone else. However, you do have a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent the transmission of HIV to your partner. Talk to your treating team about this.

Your doctor will have to undertake contact tracing to ensure the relevant people get a HIV test. This will be anonymous and your name will not be disclosed to anyone by the doctor. Being honest with contact tracing is important to ensure the health of the community.

When should I start to take medication?

Although early treatment is best for your health and may well make you feel better, some people prefer to wait a while until they feel more comfortable with their diagnosis. Work with your medical team to make the best decision for you.

Will I be okay?

Yes, of course! Modern treatment, means people living with HIV are leading relatively normal and healthy lives. If you are on HIV medication, your life can continue as normal.



Support services

WAAC

(08) 9482 000
waac.com.au

HIV Information Line

1300 565 257

M Clinic

(08) 9227 0734
mclinic.org.au

View Street Medical

(08) 9227 0170
viewstreetmedical.com.au

Positive Organisation WA (POWA)

0431905338
powa.net.au

HIV/AIDS Legal Centre Inc. (HALC)

(02) 9492 6540
halc.org.au