



# HIV & Aging

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people aged 55 and older accounted for more than one-quarter (26%) of the estimated 1.2 million people living with HIV in the U.S. in 2011. The CDC ranks of those over age 50 living with HIV are rapidly increasing. In 2009, 32.7 percent of people with a diagnosis of HIV infection were age 50 and over, compared with 17 percent in 2001. The CDC projected that in 2015, more than half of all HIV-infected Americans would be over 50 years old.

At the start of HIV and AIDS more than 30 years ago, people who were diagnosed could expect to live only 1-2 years after that diagnosis. This meant that the issues of aging were not a major focus for people with HIV infection. Thanks to improvements in the effectiveness of antiretroviral therapy (ART), people with HIV who are diagnosed early in their infection, and who have access to and stay on ART can keep the virus suppressed and live as long as their HIV-negative peers.

## Challenges of HIV & Aging

One of the major challenges of HIV and aging is the lack of public awareness. The stigmatization of HIV creates a barrier to knowledge and education about HIV within the aging population. There is a misperception that it's just a "young" person's disease or relegated to only a certain subset of people. HIV can affect individuals of ALL ages.

The health needs of the increasing number of HIV-positive Americans who are reaching older ages have become a significant public health issue. HIV appears to increase the risk for several age-associated diseases as well as to cause chronic inflammation throughout the body. Chronic inflammation is associated with a number of health conditions, including *cardiovascular disease*, *lymphoma*, and *type 2 diabetes*. Even when their disease is well controlled, people with HIV can develop aging-related conditions such as cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, kidney and liver disease, osteoporosis, and cognitive impairment decades ahead of their HIV-negative counterparts. Their life expectancy can be significantly reduced.

Some additional challenges those living with HIV in the later stages of life include:

- Late diagnoses due to health care providers not always testing older people for HIV.
- Those who are aging may mistake HIV symptoms for those of normal aging and don't consider HIV as a cause.
- Aging Americans are more likely than younger Americans to be diagnosed with HIV late in the course of their disease, meaning they get a late start to treatment and possibly more damage to their immune system. This can lead to poorer prognoses and shorter survival after an HIV diagnosis.

## Risk of Contracting HIV in the Aging Population

“There’s a certain misperception out there,” notes Dr. Basil Eldadah, acting chief of the Geriatrics Branch in NIA’s Division of Geriatrics and Clinical Gerontology. “Older people may believe that HIV is a young person’s disease. But older adults—and the healthcare providers who take care of them—should remember that the risk factors for getting infected with HIV/AIDS are the same for older individuals as they are for younger adults. In addition, physical changes that naturally occur with age, such as compromised skin and mucous barriers and an altered immune system, may possibly increase susceptibility to infection in older age.”

Older people have many of the same risk factors for HIV infection as younger people. However, one of the major differences between younger and older populations is their exposure to HIV education. Some older individuals sometimes lack knowledge about HIV and how to prevent it.

## How AGE Is Tackling the Challenges of Aging with HIV

The so called “Graying of HIV” is a relatively new challenge within the aging population. AGE of Central Texas provides services to address some of the medical challenges associated with the diagnosis for both those living with HIV and their care partners. There have been small strides in regards to the stigmatization of HIV. AGE of Central Texas recognizes this stigmatization as a barrier to receiving adequate medical care and support. Not only does a person living with HIV experience barriers to care and services, but so do their caregivers. Every person should be treated with dignity, respect, and compassion. An individual living with HIV is no exception and we strive to make our services accessible for all.

## The importance of Supportive HIV Services

Living with HIV presents certain challenges, no matter what your age. But older people with HIV may face different issues than their younger counterparts, including greater social isolation and loneliness. Stigma is also a particular concern among older people with HIV. Stigma negatively affects people’s quality of life, self-image, and behaviors. This stigma ultimately may prevent them disclosing their HIV status or seeking HIV care. Therefore, it is important for older people with HIV to get linked to care. Also, to ensure those living with the infection have access to mental health and other support services to help them stay healthy and remain engaged in care.

**According to the U.S. Administration for Community Living, some 17 percent of new cases of HIV are among older people.**



## Services AGE of Central Texas Offers to Assist Those Living with HIV/AIDS

### **Health Equipment Lending**

HIV appears to increase the risk for age-associated diseases. HIV can also cause inflammation related conditions. There are a number of chronic inflammation related diseases. These conditions can result in numerous symptoms that impact Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). This disruption in everyday activities such as toileting, ambulating, and showering often times require medical equipment and other assistive devices.

Unwanted or unneeded medical equipment has life-changing power when it is passed along. The AGE of Central Texas **Health Equipment Lending Program** makes a wide variety of health and mobility equipment available to the community through free, no-time-limit loans of donated equipment. In 2016, more than 1,200 individual seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those in need received equipment loans provided at no charge. This program depends on donations of used equipment, which we then clean and repair so we can give these items new purpose for those who need them. The program also distributes adult incontinence products to those who need them.

<http://www.ageofcentraltx.org/help.php>

### **Early Memory Loss Support**

HIV and its treatment can also have profound effects on the brain. Although AIDS-related dementia, once relatively common among people with HIV, is now rare, researchers estimate that more than 50 percent of people with HIV have an *HIV-Associated Neurocognitive Disorder* (HAND). HAND may include deficits in attention, language, motor skills, memory, and other aspects of cognitive function that may significantly affect a person's quality of life.

AGE of Central Texas **Memory Connections** early memory loss support program (formally known as Early Memory Loss Support Program) is committed to enhancing the mental and physical health and the overall quality of life of people affected by early stage dementia. The vision of AGE's Memory Connections program is to provide education, information, and support to people experiencing the symptoms of early-stage dementia as well as their caregivers, in order that they may remain as independent for as long as possible. Our team of professionals and dedicated volunteers continually strive to provide a high-quality, evidence-informed program designed to offer opportunities for cognitive stimulation and social engagement to the person living with early-stage dementia. [http://www.ageofcentraltx.org/early\\_memory\\_loss.php](http://www.ageofcentraltx.org/early_memory_loss.php)

### **Caregiver Information and Resource Center**

Some of the medical conditions that can evolve later in life can sometimes be further exacerbated by a medical diagnosis of HIV. When symptoms and ADLs become unmanageable, a person's only option is to become reliant on a caregiver. Caregivers often feel isolated and alone. AGE can help change that. Whether you are looking for information, education, ideas, or an understanding ear, we are here to help you as you help your senior loved one navigate the challenges of aging.

AGE offers educational events, information, resources, and support groups for people who provide care to an aging or disabled adult. Through collaborative relationships, we help to educate the community about the value of caregiving. All of our caregiver services are provided at no cost. Please call us at 512-600-9275 for assistance and to explore our caregiver resources.

<http://www.ageofcentraltx.org/caregiver.php>

## **Caregiver U**

CaregiverU is a collaboration of more than 30 Central Texas non-profit agencies and community organizations, joining together to bring support and resources to families that are caring for an older loved one.

Classes for caregivers are offered at no cost to participants. The courses are offered multiple times throughout the year at various locations in Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Bastrop counties. Class days and times vary depending on which agency is hosting the course. Class schedules and more information is available at **[www.CaregiverUcentx.org](http://www.CaregiverUcentx.org)**.

## **Adult Day Health Centers**

Our Adult Day Health Centers provide exceptional daytime care for older adults with physical needs or memory loss. Your loved one can enjoy an active, social day while receiving the care and support he or she needs in a vibrant community setting.

Our centers in Austin and Round Rock are the longest-operating, licensed adult day care programs in Central Texas. In our secure facilities, your loved one will receive expert care from compassionate staff that are equipped to handle your loved one's complex health and memory loss-related needs. Our philosophy is to put the person first before their diagnosis—we believe the unique passions and personalities of the individuals that spend time with us every day are what make our centers exceptional.

**AGE's Mission Statement:** "Tackling the challenges of aging with expert solutions. We are dedicated to older adults and those who care for them."

**AGE's Shared Vision:** To make aging a shared journey of strength and compassion



### **If you have any questions, please contact:**

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## Helpful Local Websites and Where to Find HIV/AIDS Services:

### **HIV/AIDS Testing and Care Services Locator**

<https://locator.aids.gov/>

### **AIDS Services of Austin (ASA)**

Food bank, dental clinic, legal services, and more

<http://www.asaustin.org/>

### **Austin Travis County Integral Care (ATCIC) – Community Care Resources and Education (C.A.R.E) Program**

Mental Health Services, Substance Use Services, and Case Management

<http://www.integralcare.org/community-aids-resources-and-education-care>

### **Care Communities**

Non-medical, practical, and emotional support for those living with serious medical conditions

<http://carecommunities.org/>

### **Community Action Inc. of Central Texas – Rural AIDS Services Program (RASP)**

<http://communityaction.com/our-services/health-services/rural-aids-assistance-program/>

### **Community Care Health Centers – David Powell Clinic**

Health clinic specializing in the treatment of HIV/AIDS/AIDS

<http://communitycaretx.org/locations/davidpowell.html>

### **Housing Opportunities for People with Aids (HOPWA)**

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hopwa/>

### **The Wright House Wellness Center**

Support Groups, Holistic Health Therapies, Case Management, and Housing Services

<http://www.thewrighthouse.org/>

## Events:

### **HIV and Aging Conference**

[www.HIVandAgingConference.com](http://www.HIVandAgingConference.com)

### **National HIV & Aging Awareness Day**

<https://www.aids.gov/news-and-events/awareness-days/aging/>