

HIV #LanguageMatters: Using Preferred Language to Reduce Stigma

Created for and by People Living with HIV

| Stigmatizing | Preferred |
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| HIV infected person | Person living with HIV, PLHIV. Do not use “infected” when referring to a person. |
| HIV or AIDS patient, AIDS or HIV carrier | Use People First Language , which puts the person before the diagnosis or label. For example, instead of “HIV positive women”, use “women living with HIV”. |
| Positives or HIVers | |
| Died of AIDS, to die of AIDS | Died of AIDS-related illness, AIDS-related complications, or end stage HIV |
| AIDS virus | HIV (AIDS is a diagnosis not a virus and cannot be transmitted) |
| Full-blown AIDS | There is no medical definition for this phrase, simply use the term AIDS, or Stage 3 HIV |
| HIV virus | This is redundant, simply use HIV |
| Zero new infections | Zero new HIV acquisitions/transmissions |
| HIV infections | HIV transmissions, diagnosed with HIV, people living with HIV |
| HIV infected | Person living with/diagnosed with HIV or acquired HIV |
| Number of infections | Number diagnosed with HIV or /number of HIV acquisitions |
| Became infected | Contracted, acquired, diagnosed with |
| HIV-exposed infant | Infant exposed to HIV |
| Serodiscordant couple | Serodifferent, magnetic, or mixed status couple |
| Mother to child transmission | Vertical transmission/perinatal transmission |
| Victim, Innocent Victim, Sufferer, contaminated, infected | Person living with HIV; survivor, thriver; warrior (Do not use “infected” when referring to a person) |
| AIDS orphans | Children orphaned by loss of parents/guardians who died of AIDS related complications |
| AIDS test | HIV test (AIDS is a diagnosis, there is no such thing as an AIDS test) |
| To catch AIDS, Transmit AIDS, To catch HIV, to spread HIV | An AIDS diagnosis; developed AIDS; to contract HIV; the transmission of HIV |
| Compliant | Adherent; taking medication as prescribed |
| Prostitute or prostitution | Sex worker; sale of sexual services; transactional sex |
| Promiscuous | Has or having multiple partners |
| Unprotected sex | Condomless sex with PrEP, Condomless sex without PrEP, sex not protected by condoms, sex not protected by antiretroviral prevention methods |
| Death Sentence, Fatal condition or life-threatening condition | HIV is a chronic health condition, a manageable health condition (as long as people are in care and treatment) |
| “Tainted” blood; “dirty” needles | Blood containing HIV; shared needles |
| Clean, as in “I am clean are you?” | Referring to yourself or others as being “clean” suggests that those living with HIV are dirty. Avoid this term |
| “a drug that prevents HIV infection” | a drug that prevents the transmission of HIV, PrEP |
| End HIV, End AIDS | End HIV transmission, Be specific: are we ending HIV or AIDS? |

Thanks to those who have assisted in the creation and dissemination of this information.
We continue to educate in order to reduce stigma and improve the quality of life for those living with HIV.
In honor of those who have gone before us and those who continue to advocate for human rights.

