

# **Foreigner with human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV) infection in Taiwan: Question and Answer**

## **I. What should I do if I just got diagnosed with HIV in Taiwan?**

Answer: Since HIV infection is classified as a communicable disease, when physicians detect HIV in patients they shall report to health authorities. Additionally, you will be directly contacted by personnel from health authorities to provide you with the relevant assistance and consultation as well as other services such as referring your partners to designated medical institutions for care. HIV infections can be under control if regular medical treatment is received. Do not worry. Your privacy will be protected throughout the entire process. Please call the local health departments if you have questions related to seeking medical care. You may also look for information on the Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (Taiwan CDC) official website (<https://www.cdc.gov.tw>), or call the Taiwan CDC's toll-free 1922 epidemic prevention hotline for further inquiries.

## **II. What cooperation do health authorities require from those who have been reported as an HIV-infected individual in Taiwan?**

Answer: According to Taiwan's "HIV Infection Control and Patient Rights Protection Act," you must cooperate with the following from the health departments:

- (I) Individuals infected with HIV can effectively manage their condition by consistently seeking medical care. To protect your health, please visit an HIV-designated medical facility for treatment and health care.

- (II) To prevent the transmission of HIV to your spouse or partner via high-risk behaviors, you should practice safe sex (using a condom correctly during sex and a water-based lubricant). Additionally, you should also avoid sharing needles, diluted solutions, containers, or injections.
- (III) For your partner or people who have shared needles with you to understand their health conditions, we need your assistance in providing the potential infection source or contacts. The health authorities will follow-up by notifying them the risk, providing health education and confirming their infection status without disclosing your identity. This is to prevent your partner from contracting HIV from practicing unsafe sex, sharing needles/diluted solutions/containers, or even vertically transmitting the infection to the baby.
- (IV) Health authorities' personnel will contact you to see how you are getting on with the treatment and whether your condition is under control.
- (V) When seeking medical care, if you are not under circumstances where there is no privacy or in cases of emergency, please let the medical personnel know that you are infected with HIV and your treatment situation to receive the most suitable care for you.

**III. What are the benefits of receiving HIV infection treatment?**

Answer: Presently, HIV infections cannot be cured. However, by periodically seeking medical care and complying with the doctor's order for taking medication, the HIV viral load in your body can be adequately controlled. This can keep your body in a healthy state

and prevent you from getting other opportunistic infections due to lower immunity. Furthermore, when the viral load in your body is undetectable for a period, this also helps to prevent the transmission of HIV to your partner during sexual behavior (i.e. U = U, Undetectable = Untransmittable).

**IV. In Taiwan, what are the protections towards the rights and interests of people with HIV infection? What should I do if my rights and interests are being infringed?**

- (I) Answer: According to Article 4 in Taiwan's "HIV Infection Control and Patient Rights Protection Act," the dignity and the legal rights of the infected shall be protected and respected; there shall be no discrimination, no denial of education, medical care, employment, nursing home, housing, or any other unfair treatment. Additionally, according to Article 14: Competent authorities, medical institutions, medical personnel, and other persons who are in possession of information such as names and medical records of the infected through their business, except by the regulations of laws or for the needs of transmission prevention and medical care, shall not release such information.
- (II) If you face unfair treatment or discrimination due to your status as a person infected with HIV, you may follow Article 7 in the "Regulations Governing Protection of the Rights of HIV Patients" and submit appeals to the local competent authorities. For details over the appeals, please go to the local (city/county) health departments or call the Taiwan CDC's toll-free 1922 epidemic prevention hotline for further

inquiries.

**V. Will people at school or the workplace know I am infected with HIV?**

Answer: Competent authorities, medical institutions, medical personnel, and other persons who are in possession of confidential information such as names and medical records of the infected through their occupation, except by the regulations of laws or for the needs of transmission prevention and medical care, shall not release such information unless you have the permission to do so. Therefore, people at school, workplace, even your family or partners will not learn that you are infected with HIV.

**VI. If it is discovered that I have been diagnosed with HIV after my arrival in Taiwan, will I be deported?**

Answer: No! The amended “HIV Infection Control and Patient Rights Protection Act,” which took place on February 4, 2015, abolished the restriction over entry, sojourn and residency for foreigners with HIV infection. Therefore, foreign nationals will not be deported because of their HIV infection.

**VII. Can the employer deport migrant workers or terminate their employment if they discover that the worker has been diagnosed with HIV infection after their arrival in Taiwan?**

Answer: No! The rights and interests of migrant workers shall be protected even if they are infected with HIV. Since HIV testing is not a required part of the health examination for employment of migrant workers, termination of employment for migrant workers based on HIV infection is not allowed.

**VIII. Where can HIV-infected individuals go for treatment?**

Answer: The designated medical institutions of the Ministry of Health and Welfare can provide HIV testing and consultation services, and HIV treatment and health care. You should look for the nearest designated medical institution. Besides, you can also look for information on the Taiwan CDC's official website (<https://www.cdc.gov.tw/>) or call the Taiwan CDC's toll-free 1922 epidemic prevention hotline for further inquiries.

**IX. Will there be any subsidy if we receive HIV treatment in Taiwan?**

Answer:

- (I) The explanation over the treatment subsidy for foreigners infected with HIV is as follows: Those who fulfill the following requirements will receive a subsidy for HIV treatment. Those who do not fulfill the requirements and have been notified of HIV infection in Taiwan but have not completed drug therapy for 2 years will need to pay for their own treatment.
1. Foreign spouse (including China, Hong Kong, and Macau).
  2. Thailand and Myanmar Project and Tibetan staying in Taiwan.
  3. Foreigners who get infected with HIV during medical treatment in Taiwan.
- (II) If you have been enrolled in the National Health Insurance (NHI) program, have been notified with HIV infection in Taiwan and have completed drug therapy for 2 years, your expenses for HIV/AIDS treatment will follow the NHI subsidy

scheme. Please call the direct line of the National Health Insurance Administration 0800-030-598 for assistance and more details.

**X. Do I need an abortion if I am already pregnant? How can I keep my baby from being infected with HIV?**

Answer: If you discover that you are infected with HIV during early stage of pregnancy, we strongly recommend you to consult with your doctor before reaching a decision of choosing abortion or not. If you decide to continue the pregnancy, you should go to the designated hospitals to receive HIV medications and take preventative measures to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission. We also suggest that you take consultation from your doctor to find a proper way to give birth. Then receiving preventative medications and utilizing breast milk replacement after the baby is born.

**XI. Which departments can we seek help from if we are infected with HIV?**

Answer: Apart from going to the designated HIV medical institutions and local health departments near you, you may also go to LGBTI+ community health centers or HIV/AIDS prevention NGOs (such as Taiwan AIDS Foundation, Taiwan Lourdes Association and so forth). They provide services such as disseminating health education of HIV/AIDS, HIV testing and consultation services, individual health counseling, etc. You can seek help from your nearest service sites, or search Taiwan CDC's website for relevant information. In addition, you may call the Taiwan CDC's toll-free 1922 epidemic prevention hotline for

further inquiries.

If you have HIV/AIDS-related questions, please contact the designated HIV medical institutions, HIV/AIDS prevention NGOs, local health departments, LGBTQI+ community health centers and so forth. If you are a migrant worker, you can also contact the Migration Consulting Service Center and refer to the “Intervention for Migrant Workers with HIV/AIDS After Arriving in Taiwan – Q&A” (this can be found at the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Taiwan Centers for Disease Control website: <https://gov.tw/B67>).