

# Entertainment WEEKLY

## Charlie Sheen on *Today*: I am HIV positive

Actor breaks silence: 'I have to put a stop to this onslaught, this barrage of attacks of sub-truths'

By James Hibberd | November 17, 2015



Charlie Sheen broke his silence on his health issues on NBC's *Today* on Tuesday, telling Matt Lauer he has HIV.

Confirming weeks of speculation, the former *Two and a Half Men* star told Lauer:

— “I’m here to admit I am, in fact, HIV positive,” Sheen said. “I have to put a stop to this onslaught, this barrage of attacks, of sub-truths. Very harmful stories that are threatening the health of so many others. They couldn’t be farther from the truth.”

— The diagnosis arrived four years ago, Sheen revealed. “It started with what I thought was a series of cluster headaches. Sweating the bed. I was hospitalized. I thought I had a brain tumor. I thought it was over ... It’s a hard three letters to absorb. It’s a turning point in one’s life.” He claims he doesn’t know how he contracted the virus.

— Sheen said that he spent millions to keep sex partners quiet over the last four years (with Lauer later revealing that Sheen had told him off camera that the number was around \$10 million). Sheen recalled an incident where a woman took a photo of the antiretroviral medications in his bathroom after a sexual encounter and threatened to sell the photo to the tabloids. He hoped Tuesday's revelation would put an end to the extortion. "My trust turned to their treason ... we're talking about shakedowns. That's money for my children. I have five kids and a granddaughter."

— Lauer also pressed Sheen on whether he ever infected somebody else. "Impossible," responded Sheen, who claimed his partners knew he had HIV and that condoms were *almost* always used: "The two people I [had unprotected sex with], that [was done] under the care of my doctor." (More on this below.)

— Asked about the possibility of criminal charges — if he knowingly exposed a sex partner at risk without telling them — Sheen said, "Having divulged [that I have HIV to sex partners] is the reason I'm in the mess that I'm in, with all the shakedowns."

— Sheen said the reason he kept involving himself with "unsavory characters" was, "I was so depressed because of the condition I was in. I was drinking way too much, I was making bad decisions."

— Sheen added that his *Two and a Half Men* meltdown wasn't due to depression about his diagnosis: "I wish I could blame it on that, but that was more of a 'roid rage. This was on the heels of that."

— The actor also said that he will no longer be paying his extortionists: "Not after today, I'm not. That's my goal. That's not my only goal, but I think I released myself from this prison today."

— Sheen confirmed his ex-wives Denise Richards and Brooke Mueller were both aware of his condition, with Lauer noting he separated from the latter in 2011 (around the same time as his diagnosis). The actor said the headlines that bothered him the most



Dr. Huizenga

were ones that claimed "That I knew I had AIDS and I was intentionally spreading it — that's as far from the truth as anything can be."

On his future career prospects: "I'm a survivor. I've been up and down, I've been rich, I've been poor. It's another chapter in my life ... If there was one guy who was going to contract this who would deliver a cure, it's me." Sheen added that he didn't intend to be a "poster man" for HIV, but "will not shun away from responsibilities and opportunities that drive me to help others, and deliver a cure."

Sheen was joined by his physician in the second segment, who shot down rumors that Sheen has AIDS. "Charlie does not have AIDS," said Dr. Robert Huizenga, an assistant professor of clinical medicine at UCLA. "He is healthy."

Yet Huizenga did not back up Sheen's claim that it's "impossible" he could spread the disease, especially if he's having unprotected sex. "Individuals who are optimally treated with undetectable viral loads, [the risk is] incredibly low to transmit the virus," he said. "We can't say it's zero, but it's an incredibly low number."

Huizenga added his biggest concern wasn't Sheen carrying HIV but his depression and substance abuse. "We're petrified about Charlie. We're so anxious. If he was overly depressed, if he was abusing substance he would forget to take these pills."

Over the past couple weeks, tabloids have declared that a top Hollywood actor was infected with HIV, without naming the person, but while giving readers plenty of hints that pointed to Sheen. The reports also claimed the actor put female sexual partners unknowingly at risk. Yesterday, *People* [revealed that the actor was indeed Sheen](#), with Hollywood crisis manager and publicist Howard Bragman saying, "It's been going on for quite awhile. He's not necessarily comfortable talking about it. It was very hard to get up the courage for him to talk about it ... he has to be concerned about a fear of litigation from former sexual partners."

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