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Charlie Sheen discloses HIV positive diagnosis: 'It's a hard three letters to absorb'

Actor tells TV interviewer Matt Lauer that people who knew his HIV-positive status had extorted money from him to keep it a secret

By Amanda Holpuch | November 17, 2015

[Charlie Sheen](#) has disclosed that he is HIV positive, in a television interview that followed weeks of speculation about his condition.

“I am here to admit that I am in fact HIV positive and 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,” the actor [told NBC’s Today show](#) on Tuesday.

He said he had learned about the diagnosis “roughly four years ago”, adding: “It’s a hard three letters to absorb.”

Asked whether he had transmitted HIV to anyone since his diagnosis, Sheen said: “Impossible.” He also said he was “not entirely” aware of how he contracted the virus. Sheen’s doctor, [Robert Huizenga](#), told the program the actor did not have Aids.

Sheen claimed that people who knew his HIV-positive status had extorted money from him to keep it a secret.

And the Hollywood star said he would stop paying them now that his HIV status was public, adding: “I release myself from this prison today.”

The actor said one incident of extortion took place when a prostitute took a picture of his antiretroviral medication and threatened to sell it.



Today Show host Matt Lauer asked Sheen why he continued to bring people including prostitutes to his home even though they were threatening him. Sheen said it was because he was depressed.

He said that the period in March 2011 when he appeared on television and online making absurd claims and going on long tirades was not tied to his HIV status. “I wish I could blame it on that – that was more roid rage,” he said.

Sheen said that since learning that he was HIV positive, he had told all of his sexual partners about his status. He revealed that he had had unprotected sex with two people since then and that they were both under the care of his doctor.

We can’t go back to the deadly HIV stigma of the 1980s

Owen Jones

Huizenga said Sheen had an undetectable level of HIV in his blood and was “absolutely healthy”. He said that he was more concerned about Sheen’s history of substance abuse and depression and how those things could negatively affect his HIV treatment. Sheen said he was not currently using drugs but was drinking alcohol.

The actor’s health status has been an open secret in Hollywood in recent weeks, since the show business website Radar Online published a report about a Hollywood “megastar” being HIV positive. The report did not name Sheen but contained enough clues to ensure he was quickly identified as the most likely subject.

The [National Enquirer](#) named Sheen on Monday and Today announced that Sheen would appear on the show to “make a revealing personal announcement”.

CBS fired Sheen from the long-running sitcom *Two and a Half Men* [in March 2011](#) after the Golden Globe-winning actor had a public meltdown and criticised the show’s creator, Chuck Lorre. Filming had been disrupted in the



previous year as Sheen, who was the highest-paid actor on television at the time, received treatment for drug addiction.

Sheen's film credits includes Major League, Hot Shots and Being John Malkovich. He most recently starred in the FX series Anger Management, which ran from June 2012 to December 2014.

While Sheen's film and television career has quietened down in recent years, he has been writing messages about news and politics for his [11.5 million Twitter followers](#). He posted a racist message [about Barack Obama in March](#). Sheen is the son of actor Martin Sheen and brother of actor Emilio Estevez.

About 50,000 people contract HIV in the US each year, [according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). An estimated 1.2 million people in the US have HIV.

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/nov/17/charlie-sheen-reveals-hiv-positive>