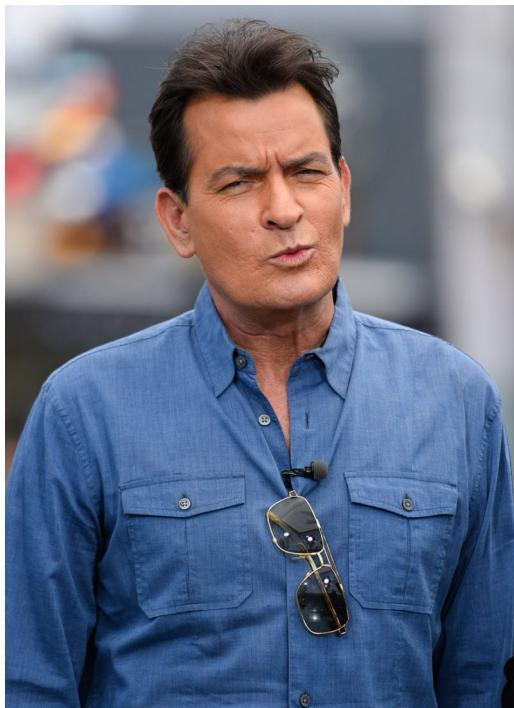


YAHOO!

Charlie Sheen Reveals He is HIV Positive

By Korine Miller | November 17, 2015



Charlie Sheen is HIV positive, the actor revealed in a Nov. 17 interview with "Today." (Getty Images)

"I'm here to admit that I'm in fact HIV positive," Sheen told Matt Lauer. "I have to put a stop to this onslaught, this barrage of attacks and of sub-truths and very harmful stories that are about threatening the health of so many others which couldn't be further from the truth."

The news was leaked on Monday (Nov. 16) after a tabloid report surfaced that claimed Sheen has been hiding his diagnosis for four years. "Charlie thought he was indestructible and took no precautions — even though he was indulging in high-risk sex practices," a friend of Sheen told *The National Enquirer*.

The tabloid also alleges that Sheen may have spread the virus to dozens of women, who weren't told about his condition.



Dr. Huizenga

Sheen, 50, says he doesn't know how he contracted the virus, but denies that he's infected others. He says he's had unprotected sex with two people since his diagnosis, but they were "under the care of my doctor and completely warned ahead of time."

Sheen added that it's "impossible" that he could have infected anyone else.

The actor says he decided to come forward with the news because he has been extorted by prostitutes and other people close to him who threatened to go public with his diagnosis. "I've paid people," he said. "Enough to bring it into the millions."

Sheen says he "made a lot of bad decisions" after his diagnosis, adding that his diagnosis wasn't linked to his famous meltdown in 2011 which led to his firing from "Two and a Half Men."

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), more than 1.2 million Americans have HIV and nearly 13 percent are unaware that they have the infection. About 50,000 people are infected with HIV each year, the CDC reports, but gay and bisexual men, as well as men who have sex with other men, are most at risk of infection.

Sheen's doctor, [Robert Huizenga, MD](#), joined him on the show and said the actor now has an undetectable level of the virus in his blood.

That means that Sheen's "viral load" (the amount of the HIV virus in his blood) is completely suppressed, Jeffrey Lennox, MD, a professor of infectious diseases at the Emory University School of Medicine, tells Yahoo Health.

When you have an undetectable amount of the HIV virus in your blood, it doesn't mean that there's zero HIV in your blood, he says. "We hate to say 'zero,' because if you use special tests, you can detect it," Lennox says. "What we say is that it's below the standard detection. We call that a 'suppressed viral load.'"

However, one man has been cured of HIV to date. Timothy Brown was diagnosed with HIV in 1995 and received a stem cell transplant for leukemia in 2007 and 2008. He has not taken medication for HIV since then and is considered cured of the disease. He founded the [Cure for AIDS Coalition](#) in 2014, which strives to find a cure for HIV and AIDS.



It's possible to live a fairly normal life while HIV-positive, Lennox says: "It's not as much of a death sentence as it was 20 years ago, but it's not like you can forget that you have it for a while."

Here's why: People who have been diagnosed with HIV and are on medication have to take it religiously. Some people only need to take one pill a day thanks to medications like Stribild, Complera, and Atripla, but they need to stay on top of it. "If you're not taking HIV medication every single day, you can build up resistance and gradually the medicine stops working for you," explains Lennox. "Until we have a cure, it's not something that people can not take seriously."

Lennox says life with HIV is a "fairly rosy picture" if you're organized and motivated with health insurance that covers the cost of medication. "But if you don't fit into those categories, it can be a burden to try to stay healthy," he says.

Olga Wildfeuer, MD, a board-certified doctor of HIV medicine at Harlem Healthcare, a federally qualified health care center in New York City, tells Yahoo Health that people who are HIV-positive who seek the proper care and take their medicine are expected to have a normal life span.

"HIV is not considered a special disease anymore," she says. "It's really considered a chronic disease like hypertension and heart disease. Most people with HIV die from other diseases."

And, if a person is regularly taking their medication and their virus is completely suppressed, they're much less likely to infect other people, Lennox says.

However Wildfeuer says HIV is still a disease that people should worry about, and it's most often contracted sexually. "It's really strange, most of my newly-infected people are in their twenties," she says. "It's young people that are getting it. They're not afraid of it anymore ... but they should be."

<https://www.yahoo.com/health/charlie-sheen-hiv-positive-130015731.html>