



HIV TREATMENT AND ‘TREATMENT AS PREVENTION’

How is HIV treated?

If you're diagnosed with HIV, your doctor will talk to you about starting HIV treatments called antiretrovirals. Treatment comprises tablets, that are taken daily.

It is recommended that people who are diagnosed with HIV, start treatment as soon as possible. This is to reduce the amount of time the HIV has to reproduce itself and therefore limit the damage the virus can do to the immune system.

People living with HIV who are on HIV treatment can now expect to live to the same age as people without HIV.

How can I know whether the treatment is working?

Keeping in contact with your Doctor is good practice. Your Doctor will check on the level of HIV in your blood through a blood test known as a HIV viral load test.

HIV Viral load tests will be done regularly. If the viral load has gone down, the treatment is working well. If the viral load is not going down, the doctor may change your medication. In most cases when on treatment a persons HIV viral load is so low it's called undetectable. If your level indetectable you cannot transmit the virus to anyone else. Commonly this is called **undetectable = untransmissible or U=U**. In this way HIV treatment becomes a prevention tool.

What happens without treatment?

If HIV is not treated, the HIV load will increase and damage a person's immune system leading to many illnesses, often, requiring hospitalisation. People not on treatment die much younger than people on treatment.

A person not on treatment with a high HIV viral load can easily pass HIV on to their partners if they have sex without a condom, or if they share drug injecting equipment.



What's 'undetectable viral load'?

HIV treatments cannot cure HIV, but treatment can reduce the amount of HIV in your blood to a point where it is undetectable in tests.

Can someone with an undetectable viral load pass HIV on to other people?

No. While a person's HIV load is undetectable in tests, they cannot pass HIV on to other people. This means less worry for people with HIV about passing HIV on to sex partners.

If you have HIV and you're told that your viral load is undetectable, it's important to keep getting your viral load tested every 6–12 months.

It's also important to keep using condoms to protect against other STIs. STIs are very common in our community.

What's 'treatment as prevention'?

As more people with HIV go onto treatment and get their viral load down to undetectable levels, there will be less transmission of HIV.

This is called 'treatment as prevention' because improving access to treatment for people with HIV in our community has become a type of HIV prevention.

What's 'U=U'?

You may see HIV posters at the clinic or posts online that talk about 'U=U'. This stands for 'Undetectable = Untransmissible'.

The posters are to let the community know that HIV is untransmissible if the viral load is undetectable.



Don't be shame

Diagnosed with HIV and want to know more about treatment and staying healthy? Ask your doctor!

Let's look after our health and get tested for STIs and BBVs. If we all test and get treated, we can stop the spread of STIs and BBVs in our community.

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