

HIV Treatment Can Prevent Sexual Transmission

— People with HIV should take medicine to treat HIV as soon as possible to —



- Improve their own health, and
- Prevent transmitting HIV to other people.



HIV medicine can reduce the amount of HIV in the blood (also called **viral load**).
HIV medicine can make the viral load so low that a test can't detect it.

This is called **undetectable viral load**.

Having an undetectable viral load (or staying virally suppressed*) is the best thing people with HIV can do to stay healthy. If their viral load stays undetectable, they have **effectively no risk** of transmitting HIV to an HIV-negative partner through sex.

— If you have HIV and want to get and keep an undetectable viral load, you will need to —



- **Take medicine daily as prescribed.** Most people can get virally suppressed within 6 months of starting treatment. Missing some doses can increase your viral load and the risk of transmitting HIV. Talk to your health care provider about ways to follow your treatment plan.
- **See your provider regularly to check your viral load.** Not everyone taking HIV medicine has an undetectable viral load. The only way to know if you have an undetectable viral load is by getting tested regularly.



— Getting and keeping an undetectable viral load prevents HIV transmission during sex. — But there are situations when either partner may consider adding other prevention options like condoms or PrEP:



- Either partner wants protection from other STDs.
- The partner with HIV missed some doses of medicine since the last viral load test, stops taking their medicine, or has trouble taking it every day.
- The partner with HIV is having difficulty keeping an undetectable viral load.
- Either partner is unsure if the person with HIV has an undetectable viral load.
- Either partner wants added peace of mind.



Get tested for other STDs. HIV treatment doesn't protect against other STDs like syphilis and gonorrhea, and other STDs can increase the chance of getting or transmitting HIV.

* Being virally suppressed means having a very low viral load (less than 200 copies of HIV per milliliter of blood). The benefits of having an undetectable viral load also apply to people who stay virally suppressed.

For more information please visit www.cdc.gov/hiv

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention
Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention

