



HIV treatment controls the virus

TREAT FOR LIFE PREVENT FOR LIFE



**World Health
Organization**

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Effective HIV treatment reduces the amount of HIV in a person's bodily fluids to a level that cannot be detected by the available laboratory technologies. This is known as "undetectable viral load".

- Having less HIV in the body allows the immune system to be restored and lessens the risk of illness due to HIV. The amount of viruses in the body can be measured by a laboratory test called "viral load" test.
- Having an undetectable viral load means a person has less risk of transmitting HIV to others.

Treat for life



The currently available antiretroviral medicines are safer, less toxic and easier to take than ever before. When successful, antiretroviral therapy (ART) helps people living with HIV live a long healthy life.

- People who may have been exposed to HIV should have access to high quality HIV testing services.
- People who test positive for HIV should be linked to care and treatment services.
- Effective treatment should be started early.
- Patients should be supported to ensure good adherence to treatment.
- Viral load tests should be conducted regularly to monitor the response to treatment.
- The quality of treatment and care services should be optimized to ensure continued engagement of people living with HIV in lifelong successful care.

Prevent for life

The viral load of a HIV-positive person is the most important determinant of the risk of transmitting HIV to others. By expanding access to treatment, there is an additional public health benefit of reducing HIV transmission in a population. This is known as “treatment as prevention”.

- People living with HIV could use treatment as an additional means to prevent transmitting the virus to their sexual partners.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV can prevent the transmission of the virus to their infants through ART.
- Treatment of people living with HIV on a large scale can result in less risk of HIV transmission among the population.

**People living
with HIV can lead
normal lives with
treatment**

Ethics of HIV treatment



The primary goal of HIV treatment is to reduce illness due to HIV, improve quality of life and survival. There are ethical considerations in the decision about when and for whom HIV treatment should be prescribed.

- The decision about initiating HIV treatment for an individual is made first and foremost in the best interest of that individual.
- Every patient has a fundamental right to make informed decisions about his or her treatment without coercion.
- When resources are limited, top priority should be given to treating people living with HIV who have the most pressing need to start treatment.
- The benefits of treatment for the individual patient should outweigh the risks.
- Everyone, irrespective of gender, age, risk behaviour or any other non-medical reason, should have equal access to treatment.
- People who receive antiretroviral therapy are retained in quality lifelong care and treatment.

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