

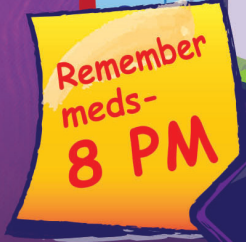
LET'S TALK about
HIV medicine

Every pill counts

TOWARD PROTECTING YOUR
HEALTH



LET'S TALK about
HIV medicine



Every pill counts

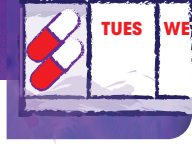
TOWARD PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH

HIV is something you can manage

With the medicines available to treat HIV, most people living with HIV are living long, healthy lives.

This brochure explains:

- **Why** HIV medicines protect your health when you take them every day
- **How** to remember to take your HIV medicines
- **What** to do about any side effects you experience
- **When** to talk to your medical provider or pharmacist
- **Where** else to go for help



“I’m afraid of HIV medicines. Do they even work?”


HIV medicines protect your health

HIV medicines work by reducing the amount of virus in your blood. This is called your *viral load*. This helps to keep the virus controlled. So, if you take your HIV medicines every day, your HIV can be controlled, and you will be able to live a longer and healthier life.

“Every day? Forever?”

The only way to reduce your viral load and keep it controlled is to take your medicines every day. If you don’t, your viral load may go up and the number of CD4 cells will go down. This is important because the CD4 cells help your body fight HIV and other infections. Not taking your medicines as directed might also make the virus change so the medicines no longer work (this is called “resistance”).

Remember, take your HIV medicines exactly the way your medical provider or pharmacist tells you to...every day.



What can happen if you don't take your medicines every day:

- Your CD4 count can go down, and your viral load can go up
- The virus can become resistant, so the medicines you are taking can stop working and you have fewer treatment choices
- When either of these occur, you can get sick and are more likely to pass the virus on to others

Taking HIV medicines—every pill, *every day*—protects your health (and protects others, too)

“I’m too busy to take pills every day.”

Taking medicines each day can be difficult.

But remind yourself that you are taking the medicines to protect your health! You have done other tough things in your life, and you can do this, too.



“I’ll never remember.”

Yes, you can!

Try to match taking your medicines with your lifestyle. For example, connect the time you take your HIV medicines to something else you do at the same time each day, such as eating a meal or getting ready for bed. You can also use reminders like calendars, pill boxes, and smart phone apps.

“I’m tired of taking pills every day. I need a break.”

Don’t give in!

Taking medicines every day is the best way to protect your health for years to come. So talk to your medical provider if you are considering stopping your medicines.

“I don’t want anyone to see me taking pills.”

Remember, lots of people take medicines every day to manage conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol. So, if you take HIV medicines, you too are doing something good for your health. But it’s important to find a time and place for taking your medicines that is comfortable for you.

Taking your HIV medicines daily is helping you get better and lead a long, healthy life.

Tips to help you stick with your medicine plan



Take your medicines at the same time each day. (See next page for what to do if you miss a dose.)



Set the alarm on a clock you always use, or even your cell phone.



Match your medicines schedule to your life: add taking your medicines to something you already do every day, like brushing your teeth.



If you take other medicines, such as medicine for high blood pressure, ask your medical provider or pharmacist if you can take your HIV medicines at the same time.



Try a weekly pill tray with compartments for each day of the week. This can help you remember whether or not you took your pills that day.



Use a calendar to check off the days you have taken your medicines.



Wear a watch to keep track of the time. Set your watch alarm for the time you need to take your medicines.



If you use the internet, download free apps for your computer or smart phone that can help remind you when it's time to take your medicines. Search for "pill reminder app" and you will find many choices.



Keep a reminder note on a mirror, on your refrigerator, or anywhere else you will see it each day.



Ask a family member or friend to help you remember.



“I’m afraid of the side effects.”

There are many ways to reduce or stop side effects.

Any medicine can cause side effects. Most side effects from HIV medicines go away after a few days. Some are more serious and may be managed by changing your medicines plan.

If you are having side effects that make you feel sick, don’t stop taking your medicines. Instead, talk to your pharmacist or call your medical provider. They can work with you to find a solution and help you stop or manage any side effects.

“What if I miss a dose of my HIV medicines?”

If you realize you have missed a dose, go ahead and take the medicine as soon as you can, then take the next dose at your usual scheduled time, unless your pharmacist or medical provider has told you something different. (For example, some medicines should only



be taken at night to reduce the chance of side effects). If you find you miss a lot of doses, talk to your pharmacist or medical provider about ways to help you remember.

“It’s too expensive”

Programs and services are available to help people who have limited or no insurance and people who can’t afford to buy medicines. Please see the back of this brochure for more information.

“I want to beat the virus”

Remember, taking your pills every day will protect your health because it will keep the HIV virus under control.

Don’t forget to ask for help from your medical provider, pharmacist, social worker, friends, and family. Together, you can find a successful way to make taking medicines a daily part of a long, healthy life.

**It takes a lot of work to stay on your medicines.
But you can do it!**

Glossary

AIDS: Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is a disease that causes a weak immune system. AIDS increases the risk of getting certain infections and cancers.

CD4 cells: Also called T-lymphocytes, these cells are an important part of your immune system to help you fight infection. The more CD4 cells you have, the better your body can control HIV.

CD4 count: A blood test that measures the number of T-lymphocytes, or CD4 cells. If your CD4 count goes down, your risk of developing infections goes up.

HIV: Human immunodeficiency virus. HIV is the virus that can lead to AIDS. A person can have HIV and not have AIDS.

HIV medicines: HIV medicines help to control the virus and stop it from getting worse. The medicines



are called “antiretroviral therapy” and are sometimes referred to as ART.

Immune system: The body’s defense against infection and disease. The immune system is made up of different types of cells that fight infections and viruses to keep you healthy.

Medicine resistance: HIV can mutate (or change) causing the HIV medicines to stop working. This can happen if the HIV medicines are not taken every day, as instructed.

STDs (sexually transmitted diseases): Diseases that are spread by having sex. Examples are syphilis and gonorrhea.

Viral load: Refers to the amount of HIV virus in the blood. As your viral load increases, your risk of becoming sick increases as well.

For more information on protecting yourself and others:

Contact CDC-INFO online at <http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/> or call 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) (TTY: 888-232-6348) Monday to Friday 8:00 am to 8:00 pm ET

Your call is free and private.

For help with paying for medicines:

Both Medicaid and the Ryan White Program are available to provide care for those with limited or no health insurance.

For **Medicaid**, check your State Health Department.

To find a nearby **Ryan White Program**, go to http://findhivcare.hrsa.gov/Search_HAB.aspx, or call (877) 464-4772, Monday through Friday (except Federal holidays), 9:00 am to 5:30 pm ET.

Ask your medical provider if the maker of your medicines has a program to help you pay for it.

You can also find lots more information about HIV at www.cdc.gov/actagainstaids

ACT
against
AIDS

PREVENTION
IS CARE

Protect Yourself. Protect Others.