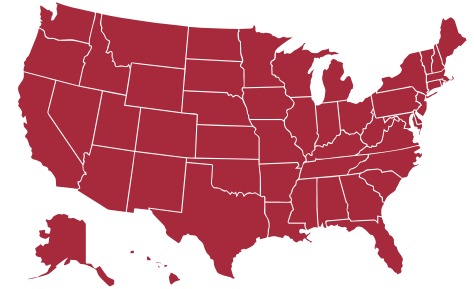


HIV and Treatment

UNDERSTANDING HIV TODAY:

Forty-five years into the global fight against HIV, and while scientific progress has successfully transformed HIV from a fatal diagnosis into a manageable chronic condition, the work is far from over. The reality is that the epidemic persists, with more than 39,000 new HIV diagnoses each year in the United States.



What are HIV and AIDS?

- HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus, which is the virus that causes HIV infection.
- AIDS stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV infection.
- HIV attacks and destroys the infection-fighting CD4 cells (CD4 T lymphocytes) of the immune system. The loss of CD4 cells makes it difficult for the body to fight off infections, illnesses, and certain cancers.
- Without treatment, HIV can gradually destroy the immune system and may cause a decline in health or progress to AIDS. This includes an increased likelihood of getting other infections like hepatitis, tuberculosis, and some sexually transmitted infections.
- With treatment, the body can prevent HIV from destroying CD4 cells, allowing the immune system to recover and protect against other infections.

What's the difference between HIV and AIDS?

HIV is the virus that can cause the condition AIDS. The two terms should not be used interchangeably because they are not the same thing – not all people who are living with HIV will develop AIDS. This is due to improvements in life-changing treatments such as antiretroviral therapy (ART). ART can help people with HIV live long, healthy lives, and it can eliminate the risk of transmitting HIV.¹ With consistent ART treatment, people living with HIV can achieve an **undetectable viral load**, meaning they cannot transmit the virus to others, a concept known as undetectable=untransmittable (U=U). However, receiving an early HIV diagnosis is key.

WAYS TO TRANSMIT HIV:

HIV can only be transmitted through specific bodily fluids of a person living with HIV who has a detectable viral load.

These fluids include:

1. Semen
2. Pre-seminal fluid
3. Vaginal and rectal fluids
4. Blood
5. Breast milk



This means HIV can be spread through anal sex, vaginal sex, injection drug use (specifically sharing needles or syringes), or from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding (perinatal transmission).

HIV cannot be spread by being near someone who has it. HIV is also not transmitted by:

- Touching a toilet seat, a doorknob, or gym equipment
- Drinking from a water fountain or sharing dishes
- Swimming in a pool
- Hugging, close-mouthed kissing, or shaking hands
- Being bitten by a mosquito



**Check out the back
for treatment options**

WAYS TO PREVENT HIV:

- **Condoms**
- **Knowing Your Status**
- **Treatment as prevention (U=U)**
- **PrEP and PEP**



Preventing HIV is a vital step to ending the HIV epidemic.

With more HIV prevention options than ever before, now is the time for each of us to consider the role we can play in preventing HIV. For more information on these preventative strategies, view our HIV and Prevention Tip Sheet: [HIV and Prevention Tip Sheet](#).

What is Treatment for HIV?

HIV treatment has advanced substantially over the past decades. It has created an environment where HIV is treated as a manageable chronic condition. Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is the use of HIV medicines to treat HIV. People being treated for HIV take a combination of HIV medicines (called an HIV treatment regimen) as prescribed by their healthcare provider. Treatment can be taken either as a long-acting injectable medication or daily oral pills. **It is through effective treatment that people living with HIV maintain an undetectable viral load.**

ART is recommended for everyone who has HIV to prevent the virus from multiplying, which reduces the amount of HIV in the body (called the viral load). Having less HIV in the body protects the immune system and prevents HIV from advancing to AIDS. ART cannot cure HIV, but it can help people with HIV live long, healthy lives.



THE EVOLUTION OF HIV TREATMENT AND PREVENTION INNOVATIONS

Even with highly effective medicines, there can be a gap between what a medicine can do and what patients experience day-to-day. Daily oral pill regimens can present real challenges, including pill fatigue, daily anxiety, and the persistent fear of disclosure due to the stigma associated with taking HIV medication. To address these real-world barriers, the therapeutic landscape evolved to ensure that people living with HIV have options.

This evolution led to the introduction of the first-ever **long-acting injectable** (LAI) options for HIV treatment and prevention, marking a paradigm shift in HIV care delivery. By offering options that provide discretion and convenience, LAIs can help individuals overcome daily reminders of living with HIV while supporting greater personal flexibility and peace of mind in managing their long-term health. People living with HIV today have a number of choices in HIV treatment and should talk to their provider about what would best fit their life.

Resources:

<https://hlthact.org/Hollywood-HIV-Tip-Sheets>.

www.HIVpreventionforum.com

www.GetPrEPWisdom.com