

# Fact Sheet

# U = U

## UNDETECTABLE = UNTRANSMITTABLE

### Building Hope, Stopping HIV Transmission

Taking HIV treatment as prescribed to achieve an undetectable viral load helps people with HIV stay healthy and live longer, while offering the benefit of preventing sexual transmission of HIV.



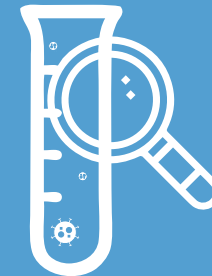
## Burning questions answered

### What does Undetectable equals Untransmittable (U=U) mean?

Undetectable equals Untransmittable or “U=U” refers to the fact that people living with HIV who take antiretroviral therapy (ART) daily as prescribed and who achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit the virus to an HIV-negative sexual partner.

### After I begin HIV treatment, how long does it take to become undetectable?

Most people living with HIV who start taking ART daily as prescribed achieve an undetectable viral load within one to six months after beginning treatment. You can only be sure after taking a viral load test and the results confirm an undetectable viral load.

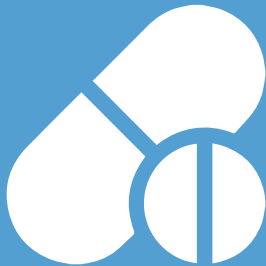


## Does being undetectable mean that the virus has left my body?

No. Even when the viral load is undetectable, HIV is still present in the body. The virus lies dormant inside a small number of cells, called reservoirs, in the body. When treatment is halted by missing doses or when you take a treatment holiday or you stop treatment completely the virus emerges and begins to multiply, becoming detectable in the blood again. This newly reproducing virus is infectious. It is essential to take HIV treatment as prescribed to achieve and maintain an undetectable status.

## If my viral load is undetectable, can I transmit HIV to a sexual partner?

Once your viral load has been undetectable for six months you are unable to pass HIV onwards through unprotected sex, if you continue to take your HIV treatment and remain undetectable.

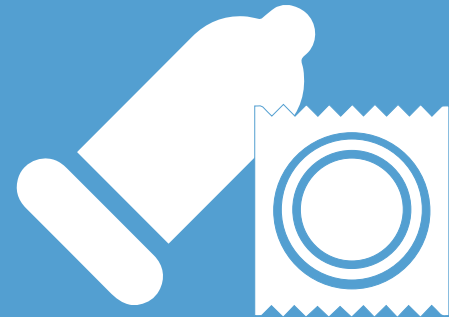


## Does U=U apply to all types of sex?

An undetectable viral load will prevent you from passing HIV onwards during oral sex, vaginal sex and anal sex. Condoms are not needed to prevent HIV transmission when your viral load is undetectable.

## Do I still need to use condoms if I'm undetectable?

Yes, ART does not prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs)--it is very important to use condoms to prevent other STIs such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, and unwanted pregnancies.



## What happens if I stop taking ART?

When ART is stopped, viral load rebounds, and the risk of transmitting HIV to a sexual partner in the absence of other prevention methods returns. Stopping and re-starting treatment can cause a phenomenon called drug resistance to develop, making that treatment regimen ineffective and limiting future treatment options.

## How often do I need to be tested to confirm that I'm undetectable?

According to HIV treatment guidelines, viral load typically should be measured every 3-4 months for pregnant women, the first six months after starting HIV treatment and once every year, thereafter. People living with HIV should talk with their healthcare providers to determine an appropriate schedule for viral load testing.



**For as long as your viral load stays undetectable, your chance of passing on HIV to a sexual partner is zero.**



To find out more about U=U, visit <https://quickres.org/assessment/264> to book an appointment with one of our healthcare providers.



U=U is an initiative of IntraHealth Namibia made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

