

COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation.

Get the latest public health information from CDC: <https://www.coronavirus.gov>

Get the latest research information from NIH: <https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus>



HIV Treatment

HIV Treatment Adherence

Last Reviewed: January 15, 2020

Key Points

- Treatment adherence includes starting HIV treatment, keeping all medical appointments, and taking HIV medicines every day and exactly as prescribed (also called medication adherence). For people with HIV, treatment adherence is key to staying healthy.
- It's best to see a health care provider as soon as possible after testing positive for HIV. Once in medical care, people with HIV should start taking HIV medicines as soon as possible.
- Because HIV requires lifelong treatment, it's important for people with HIV to regularly visit their health care provider. Ongoing medical care includes monitoring to make sure a person's [HIV regimen](#) is keeping the virus under control.

What is HIV treatment adherence?

For people with HIV, treatment adherence means:

- Starting HIV treatment
- Keeping all medical appointments
- Taking HIV medicines every day and exactly as prescribed (also called medication adherence)

Adherence to treatment is a key part of staying healthy with HIV.

How soon should a person start treatment after testing positive for HIV?

It's best to see a health care provider as soon as possible after testing positive for HIV. Once in medical care, people with HIV should start taking HIV medicines as soon as possible. Treatment with HIV medicines (called [antiretroviral therapy or ART](#)) is recommended for everyone with HIV. HIV medicines help people with HIV live longer, healthier lives. HIV medicines also reduce the risk of [HIV transmission](#).

Because HIV requires lifelong treatment, it's important for people with HIV to regularly visit their health care provider. Ongoing medical care includes monitoring to make sure a person's [HIV regimen](#) is keeping the virus under control. During regular medical appointments, health care providers can also recommend resources to help people deal with any issues that may interfere with medication adherence.

Why is medication adherence important?

Taking HIV medicines every day prevents HIV from multiplying, which reduces the risk that HIV will mutate and produce drug-resistant HIV. Skipping HIV medicines allows HIV to multiply, which increases the risk of [drug resistance](#) and HIV [treatment failure](#).

Poor adherence to an HIV regimen also allows HIV to destroy the [immune system](#). A damaged immune system makes it hard for the body to fight off infections and certain cancers.

Where can I find resources to help with HIV treatment adherence?

Explore these *AIDSinfo* and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) resources to learn more about treatment adherence:

AIDSinfo:

- [Just Diagnosed: Next Steps After Testing Positive for HIV](#)
- [How to Find HIV Treatment Services](#)
- [Following an HIV Regimen: Steps to Take Before and After Starting HIV Medicines](#)

CDC:

- [Newly Diagnosed with HIV](#)
- [Resources for Persons Living with HIV](#)

This fact sheet is based on information from the following sources:

From the Department of Health and Human Services:

- Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in Adults and Adolescents with HIV: [Initiation of Antiretroviral Therapy](#) and [Adherence to the Continuum of Care](#)

From the Health Resources and Services Administration:

- [Guide for HIV/AIDS Clinical Care: HIV Treatment/Adherence](#)

From HIV.gov:

- [HIV Care Continuum](#)