

MODERN ART FOR AFRICA

ART & ADHERENCE

Everyone with HIV
needs to take HIV treatment
– called antiretroviral
therapy, ART or ARVs

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WHAT IS ADHERENCE?*



Adherence is a word used to describe taking your HIV drugs exactly as prescribed. And keeping clinic appointments.

* This booklet was produced by people living with HIV and activists to help you with adherence.



ADHERENCE INCLUDES

- Taking your ARVs at the same time everyday.
- Following advice to take it with or without food.
- Discussing your treatment plan with your health worker and asking questions.
- Asking your health worker what other drugs you can or cannot take with ARVs.

WHY IS ADHERENCE IMPORTANT?

Adherence is the most important thing you have to think about when you start ART.

Adherence to ART will result in a reduced or undetectable viral load – which means that the medicines in your body are at high enough levels to control HIV for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If ART levels drop too low it also increases the risk of drug resistance.

You are in charge of your treatment.

**Sometimes
adherence
can be
difficult.**

**You may need
some support
to get used to
the changes
ART makes
in your life.**





Asking advice is a good start, but you have to find the way that works for you. This might mean trying a few things out until you find the right way.

- A routine or daily schedule can really help!
- Pick a time to start ART that works best for you.
- During the first few weeks, getting your ART right should be a big priority.



- Many people find it helpful to join an adherence club. See if there is an adherence club at your clinic or community organisation.
- Some clinics and/or community organisations have someone who can help. This can include people living with HIV working as treatment supporters.



HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Taking every dose at the same time each day is still the best goal to aim for.

This also helps you to get into the habit.

But, a window period of a few hours either side of your usual time is okay for most drugs and most people.





**If you miss a
dose one day
don't panic!**

**But be sure to
take the next
day's dose.**

**Do not
double the
dose the next
day if you
miss one.**

MORE TIPS

It helps to know a bit about HIV treatment when you start to take it. Most ART combinations are one tablet once a day.

- Find out things like how big the tablets are and if there are there food restrictions.
- If you have a trip or change in routine coming up, plan how to keep taking your ART regularly.





- Link the time you take your ART to another daily routine – for example brushing your teeth in the morning or evening.

- Use a weekly pill box. Then you can see if you miss a dose.



- Set the alarm on your mobile phone or watch and take your ART when it beeps! Perhaps set the alarm just after the right time, so it is a reminder and not something you rely on.





- Plan your timetable. For the first few weeks, mark the time that you take your ART. This is particularly helpful if you are also taking other medicines – such as for TB.
- Contact your clinic if you have side effects. They can prescribe additional drugs to help or change your ART if needed.
- Tell your health worker if you are experiencing any side-effects and what to do to manage them.





Most combinations are taken once-daily. This usually means taking them every 24 hours. Twice-daily ART needs to be taken every 12 hours.

If you can, keep an emergency supply where you might need it – at school or work or at a friend's house etc.

- Ask how other people manage and if they have tips. Your clinic or support group can usually arrange for you to talk to someone who is taking the same ART.
- Ask someone you trust, a family member or friend to remind you at difficult dose times – for example, when you are out at night.
- Ask if there are case managers that you can work with at the clinic that you regularly attend.





Undetectable means
untransmittable
(U=U) – which is the
aim of taking your
ART as prescribed.

ART makes it possible to
lead a long and healthy
life. You can do this!



You can find more
information on treatment
at the following links:

www.afrocab.info

www.i-base.info

www.clintonhealthaccess.org



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