

MODERN ART FOR ZIMBABWE

STARTING ART

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

JANUARY 2021



DOES ART REALLY WORK?



YES!

Treatment works and it is easy to take.

ART stops HIV from multiplying. It will help to keep you healthy.

It also reduces the risk of transmitting HIV to your sexual partner(s).

ART works whether you are female or male. It works at any age: adults, adolescents, children and babies.

ART usually means taking only one pill a day (although you may need to take more than one pill in some cases).

Taking ART exactly as prescribed reduces HIV in your body to tiny amounts (called “undetectable” or “suppressed”).

Even though you will still be HIV positive, the virus will not cause your health and immune system to deteriorate and so you can live a long and healthy life.



DO ALL HIV POSITIVE

PEOPLE NEED ART?

YES!

The Ministry of Health and Child Care, as guided by the National ART Guidelines recommends ART for everyone with HIV, whatever their CD4 count or viral load.

Over 1.4 million people have started ART in Zimbabwe.

If you are not on ART, the virus can damage your health even when you feel well.



NEW ART FOR ZIMBABWE

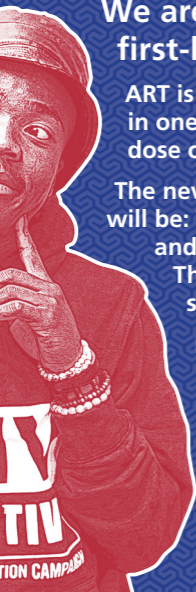
We are changing our first-line ART.

ART is usually three ARVs in one pill – called a fixed-dose combination.

The new combination of ARVs will be: Tenofovir, Lamivudine and Dolutegravir.

This combination is sometimes called TLD.

Dolutegravir is the only new drug in this combination; the older first-line combination contained the first two, Tenofovir and Lamivudine and a third one called Efavirenz.





WHAT IS DOLUTEGRAVIR?

🔊 *dol-you-TEG-rah-veer*

Dolutegravir is a type of ARV called an integrase inhibitor.

WHAT IS TAF?

TAF is a newer version of Tenofovir.

It is recommended for people above 50 years; people with kidney or bone problems and those with HBV co-infection.



WHY ARE WE NOW

TAKING DOLUTEGRAVIR?

Dolutegravir has fewer side effects and reduces your viral load quickly – so it is even easier for people to take and for treatment to be effective.

It has fewer drug to drug interactions and less likely to develop resistance.

The new combination of ARVs also comes in a smaller pill.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF DOLUTEGRAVIR?

These can include mood changes and difficulty in sleeping.

Some people find it better to take dolutegravir in the morning than the evening to help with sleep.

Weight gain has been reported, especially among women.

It is encouraged for people to live a healthy lifestyle which includes exercise and healthy eating.



DOLUTEGRAVIR

AND TB MEDICINE

Rifampicin, one of the medicines used in first-line TB treatment, can reduce the levels of other medicines, including dolutegravir.

This “interaction” between dolutegravir and rifampicin is overcome by adding an extra single dolutegravir pill (not in the TLD combination).

So dolutegravir is taken twice daily (once within TLD and once as a single dose 50mg).



OTHER MEDICINES

AND SUPPLEMENTS

There are interactions between dolutegravir and some supplements, such as, heartburn medicine, laxatives and multivitamins, including calcium supplements.

To overcome this, DTG should be taken two hours before or six hours after these medicines.

Another important interaction is that DTG doubles levels of metformin – to treat type 2 diabetes – and requires careful monitoring. So if you are diabetic and taking DTG you should consult your doctor or healthcare worker.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINES

Less well understood are interactions with traditional herbal medicines like Moringa or Aguma.



Traditional medicines are not tested or approved. We do not know what traditional medicines can do.

They might weaken the effect of ARVs.

Using them together might make the ARVs or traditional medicines more toxic.

Always consult your health worker for more information.

ADHERENCE

Adherence (meaning taking your medicines on time and as prescribed) is the most important thing you have to think about when you start and stay on ART.

If you are worried, there are lot of ways to help.

Getting into a routine makes it easier.





TESTS TO MONITOR YOUR HEALTH

CD4 COUNT

Your CD4 count tells you about your immune system.

The range for HIV negative adults is about 400 to 1600. Getting above 500 is considered normal.

Even with a very low CD4 count, ART can help your immune system recover.



VIRAL LOAD (VL)

This test shows how much virus is in a sample of blood.

On ART, viral load should be less than 50 copies/ml.

This is called undetectable and it makes HIV difficult to transmit.

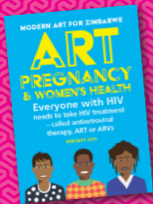
Everyone with HIV needs to take ART, no matter what their CD4 or viral load is.

You are supposed to take a viral load test at least once a year. Consult your health worker if you have not received a viral load test and result in the last year.

ART AND

PREGNANCY

There are a few extra things to consider for women taking ART who want to become pregnant.



Read our booklet on ART and pregnancy.

More information

You can find more information (or ask questions about treatment) at your local clinic, hospital or these websites:

www.pzat.org
www.i-base.info
www.afrocab.org

