

**MODERN ART FOR SOUTH AFRICA**

**FREQUENTLY  
ASKED  
QUESTIONS**

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

**NOVEMBER 2022**



# IS ART A CURE FOR HIV?

**NO.**

ART is a combination of drugs which control the virus.

We don't have a cure for HIV yet. People with HIV must take ART for the rest of their lives. ART will keep you healthy and able to enjoy a normal life.



# WHEN SHOULD I START ART?

Everyone who tests positive for HIV, should start ART as soon as possible – even if you feel healthy or have a strong immune system.

*Read our booklet "Starting ART" to find out more.*




# DOES ART HAVE SIDE EFFECTS?

Yes, ART has side effects. They vary depending on which ART regimen you are on, and can be minor to severe.

The current first-line regimen (called TLD – tenofovir, lamivudine and dolutegravir in one pill) has been proven to have less severe side effects.





**But some people experience nausea, vomiting, dizziness and headaches. These usually clear after a few days.**

**One common side effect with TLD (that tends to last longer) is insomnia. This can be resolved by taking your treatment in the morning. There are also cases of weight gain with TLD.**



## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I STOP TAKING ART?**

**The amount of virus in your body (viral load) will quickly multiply – sometimes in only a week – and go back to the level it was at before you started ART.**

**Your CD4 count – which indicates how strong your immunity is – will likely drop, though this takes longer to change after stopping your treatment.**

# CAN I TAKE ART

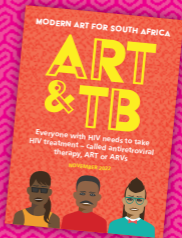
# WHILE I'M ON TB

# TREATMENT?

Yes, you can take both ART and TB treatment.

If newly diagnosed, you must be on TB treatment for two weeks before starting ART. An additional 50 mg of dolutegravir is added if you are on TB treatment and TLD.

*Read our booklet "ART & TB" for more.*



**I AM PREGNANT, IS IT**

**SAFE FOR ME TO TAKE ART?**

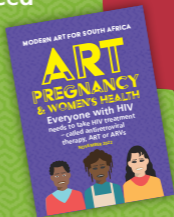
Yes. Pregnant women need to be on ART in order to protect their own health and the baby from getting infected.

**IS IT SAFE TO BREASTFEED**

**IF I AM HIV POSITIVE?**

Yes. It is safe and recommended for all mothers to breastfeed whatever their HIV status.

*Read our booklet "ART, pregnancy & women's health" to find out more.*







**CAN I TAKE MY ART**

**AT DIFFERENT TIMES?**

You must make sure that you take your ART at the same time daily in order to maintain your drug levels and prevent the virus from becoming detectable.

If you forget to take it at the right time, just take it as soon as possible. Try not to make it a habit, and don't skip doses.

**WHAT DOES AN**

**UNDETECTABLE VIRAL**

**LOAD MEAN?**

ART works by reducing the amount of HIV to very low levels in the blood (less than 50 copies). This is called having an undetectable viral load or being undetectable.

It is what is measured when you have a viral load test. When you are undetectable, the levels of HIV are so low that the virus cannot be passed on. Please note that this does not mean that you don't have the virus anymore.

**I USUALLY GET ACRIPTEGA  
AND THIS TIME THEY  
GAVE ME REYDIN.  
IS IT SAFE FOR ME  
TO TAKE THIS?**

**Yes, Acriptega and  
Reydin are both  
versions of TLD.**

**They have different  
names, branding  
and colour because  
they are made  
by different  
companies.**





# WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORIGINATOR DRUGS AND GENERIC VERSIONS?

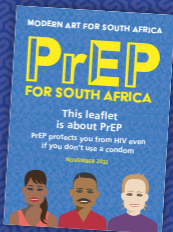
Generic medicines cost less than the original versions of drugs.

The pills might look different, but they have the same active ingredients and work just as well. They also have the same risk of side effects.

## WHAT IS PREP?

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. It is a combination of two ARVs and it protects HIV negative people from HIV. When taken every day, PrEP, stops HIV from multiplying and taking hold within the body.

*Read our booklet "PrEP for South Africa".*



## CAN I JUST BUY MY ART DIRECTLY FROM A PHARMACY?

Yes, but you will need a prescription from your doctor to be able to buy ART.

# CAN I TAKE TRADITIONAL MEDICINES (IMBIZA) IF I AM ON ART?

## NO.

It is not recommended because it is unknown what interactions Imbiza has with ART.

There might be a risk of the Imbiza reducing your drug levels and this can lead to resistance. It is better to take only medicines prescribed to you at the health facility.





# CAN IMMUNE BOOSTERS HELP INCREASE MY CD4 COUNT?

There is no such thing as immune boosters.

Even though companies might claim this in advertising, none of these products have proven to do so. They just want your money! The only thing that can help improve your CD4 count is to take ART regularly.



Find out more about treatment  
and the free app at:

[www.modernartforsouthafrica.co.za](http://www.modernartforsouthafrica.co.za)



@modernart4sa



Unitaid  
Innovation in Global Health

