

ABOUT HIV

Adherence

'Adherence' is the term that is used to describe taking your medicines properly. You'll get the most benefit from your medicines if you take them properly.

This means:

- Taking all the doses of your drugs.
- Taking your doses at the right time.
- Following any advice about food and drink (for example, not taking the drug on an empty stomach).

Why adherence matters

The best results of HIV treatment are seen in people who take all or nearly all their doses of medicine correctly. So you should aim to take all your doses. The minimum level of adherence needed for HIV treatment to work properly is 95%. If you're taking your treatment once a day that means missing (or taking incorrectly) no more than one dose a month. If you're taking your treatment twice a day, then 95% adherence means missing (or incorrectly taking) no more than three doses a month.

Not taking your HIV treatment properly could mean that the levels of the drugs in your blood are not high enough to properly fight HIV. If this happens, your HIV will be able to reproduce. The strains of HIV that reproduce when you're taking HIV treatment can develop resistance to the drugs you are taking. Resistance can mean that your HIV treatment won't work effectively and you may need to change your HIV treatment. This new treatment might be more difficult to take than the combination you were taking before and could involve a risk of more, or new, side-effects.

Stock outs

Sometimes problems with the management of health services might result in some of your medicines not being available for a time. This is unacceptable as it is very risky for your health. However neither you nor your doctor may have much control over the situation.

If you may be forced to interrupt your treatment, it's important to discuss the best way to manage the problem with your doctor. For example, if one of your medicines is available but the other two are not, he or she may advise you to stop taking all medication until they

are all available again. Depending on the medicines you are taking and how long they remain active in the body, your doctor may recommend that you stop taking one medicine before one of the others.

The advice will be specific to you and the medicines you are taking. The aim of these measures is to try to prevent the development of drug-resistant HIV.

Interactions with other medicines

Anti-HIV drugs can interact with other some other prescribed drugs, medications you can buy from a pharmacy, herbal remedies and illegal or recreational drugs. To reduce the risk of interactions, it's important to tell your HIV doctor or pharmacist about any other medicines or drugs you are taking.



Support with treatment

Most people will forget to take a dose of their medicine at some time. Don't worry too much if this happens occasionally. But talk to your doctor or someone else in your healthcare team if you are missing a lot of your doses.

There are things you can do to help you take your medicines properly. You may need to develop a routine that helps you remember to take the drugs at the same time each day. For example, some people keep a diary, or set an alarm. For other people, pill boxes help to keep track of doses and these are available from your HIV clinic.

If you're having problems taking your treatment because of side-effects, it might be possible to change to a treatment that you find easier to take.

There may be other reasons why you are finding it difficult to take your treatment as prescribed. Talking to your doctor, someone in your healthcare team, or another person you trust can help you to deal with any problems you are experiencing.

The development of www.pro-vich.info and www.about-hiv.info has been made possible thanks to generous support from Janssen. Our funder has had no editorial control over the content of either site. The information on this site is intended to support, rather than replace, consultation with a healthcare professional. Talk to your doctor or another member of your healthcare team for advice tailored to your situation.

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For more information: www.about-hiv.info; www.pro-vich.info; www.aidsmap.com

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