

Terms you may hear while on treatment.



CD4 Count:

The number of CD4 cells in your body. These cells help fight infection and disease. But HIV destroys CD4 cells, so you may have fewer of them. Fewer CD4 cells—a lower CD4 count—means your body is less able to fight off some types of illnesses.

Viral Load:

The amount of virus in a sample of your blood. When HIV enters your body, it uses CD4 cells in your immune system to make more virus. Without medication, this may cause your viral load to increase.

Undetectable:

A major goal of HIV treatment is getting your viral load to undetectable. **Undetectable means that there is so little virus in the blood that a lab test can't measure it.** If you have questions about your lab results and what it means to be undetectable, talk with your healthcare provider.

TasP—Treatment as Prevention:

If you're living with HIV, current research shows that **taking HIV treatment as prescribed and getting to and staying undetectable prevents transmitting HIV to others through sex.** This is also known as U=U (undetectable=untransmittable).

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Topics you may want to discuss with your doctor.

Viral Load Blip:

Sometimes, even if you're **undetectable** and take your HIV treatment as prescribed, you may experience a “viral load blip” or “blip.” This is when there is a temporary increase in your **viral load** and there may be enough virus in the body that HIV is no longer undetectable, but this lab result is followed by a return to undetectable during the next test. Some causes of a blip may include:

- Being sick with a cold or the flu
- Differences in the way labs process tests
- Forgetting to take your HIV medicine (which is why it's important to take it exactly as prescribed)

Talk with your doctor if you have questions about your lab results.

HIV Drug Resistance:

HIV is a virus that can mutate or change. Some mutations that develop can lead to drug resistance. Once HIV drug resistance develops, medicines that previously controlled your HIV viral load may no longer work. Some of the ways to help you avoid HIV drug resistance are to:

- Take your treatment as prescribed
- Talk to your doctor about treatments that have a high barrier to resistance

[See How](#)

We can all do something to help stop the virus in our bodies and communities.

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