



HIV Undetectable = Untransmittable

Medicines to treat HIV can eliminate the risk of sexual transmission. In August 2016, the New York City Health Department agreed with other public health and medical organizations that people with HIV who maintain an undetectable viral load for at least six months do not transmit HIV through condomless sex. This is known as: Undetectable = Untransmittable, or U = U.

How does HIV treatment prevent HIV transmission?

Antiretroviral medicines control HIV very effectively. They do not cure HIV or remove the virus from the body, but if taken every day, as prescribed, HIV medicines stop the virus from multiplying. This prevents the virus from damaging the immune system and stops sexual transmission to others.

What does undetectable mean?

Undetectable means that the level of HIV in a person's blood is so low that it doesn't show up on a viral load test. If a person is undetectable, HIV can still be hiding in their body, but the amount is so low that HIV cannot be passed to others through sex.

How do we know that Undetectable = Untransmittable?

Three recent studies — HPTN 052, PARTNER and Opposites Attract — followed male couples and heterosexual couples, in which one partner was HIV positive and the other HIV negative. During these studies, not one HIV-positive person who was taking antiretroviral medicines and was undetectable passed HIV to their negative partner — in over 34,000 instances of condomless anal sex among male couples, and over 36,000 instances of condomless vaginal or anal sex among heterosexual couples.

How do I get my viral load to be undetectable?

If you have HIV, take antiretroviral medicines as prescribed by your health care provider. After you start your medicine, your provider will take blood samples to determine when the level of HIV in your blood has become undetectable. Once you have been undetectable for six months, you will not sexually transmit HIV as long as you take your antiretroviral medicines and keep your viral load undetectable.

If I am HIV negative, should I avoid having sex with people who have HIV?

Having sex with someone who has HIV but is on treatment and is undetectable is much safer than having sex with someone who has HIV but is not on treatment or doesn't

know their status. A person who was recently infected with HIV can have a very high viral load and easily pass HIV to their partners through condomless sex. A person with HIV who is undetectable for six months will not pass HIV to their sexual partners, even if they have sex without condoms.

If my partner tells me they have an undetectable viral load, should we still use condoms?

Having an undetectable viral load prevents HIV transmission but does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or unintended pregnancy. Condoms protect against HIV, other STIs and unintended pregnancy. If you are unsure about whether your partner is undetectable, consider using condoms or take daily PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to protect against HIV. To learn more about PrEP, speak to your doctor or visit nyc.gov/health and search **daily PrEP**. You should never feel pressured to have sex without condoms.

If I am on HIV treatment, should my partner be on PrEP?

Couples share the responsibility of preventing HIV. HIV-positive people and their partners should discuss how they can have a healthy, fulfilling and worry-free sex life by using condoms, HIV treatment, PrEP or emergency PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis). HIV-negative partners may choose to take PrEP, especially if they have other sexual partners; are unsure of their partner's HIV status; are unsure of their partner's ability to keep their viral load undetectable; or feel more secure in their sex lives with the added protection of PrEP.

What else can I do to prevent getting or passing HIV and other STIs?

Get an HIV test. A positive test is an opportunity to treat HIV, stay healthy and prevent HIV transmission to others. A negative test gives you the chance to discuss ways to stay negative, like using condoms, taking daily PrEP or taking emergency PEP. Get tested regularly for other STIs. STIs may not cause you to show symptoms, but they can increase an HIV-positive person's viral load or make it easier for the virus to enter an HIV-negative person's body.

For more information on HIV, visit nyc.gov/health and search **HIV**.

For assistance with HIV care and treatment, call **311** or text **CARE** to **877877**.