
HIV Care and Treatment

HIV Care and Treatment By The Numbers:

- About 35% of the people with diagnosed HIV infection in New York are not taking advantage of any HIV care. Only 56% are in continuous care throughout the year.
- 90% of people with HIV who get continuous medical care achieve viral suppression. This means the amount of virus is so low that the viral load test cannot detect it.
- Studies show that getting early treatment and being virally suppressed reduces the chance of passing the virus to others by 96%.
- Most patients can achieve viral suppression within four months of starting treatment.

How Do HIV Care and Treatment Work?

HIV treatment is referred to as Anti-retroviral Treatment (ART). ART brings down the amount of HIV in a person's body. It also stops the virus from reproducing. Keeping the virus at a very low level prevents damage to the person's immune system or allows damage to be reversed. HIV treatment can prevent a person from progressing to an AIDS diagnosis. HIV treatment is recommended for all patients with HIV. This includes patients who feel healthy. Today, HIV treatment is:

- **Highly Effective:** Many patients can achieve viral suppression within four months of starting treatment, if they take the medication as prescribed.
- **Easy to Take:** For many patients, HIV treatment is as simple as taking one pill a day.
- **Easy to Tolerate:** Side effects are minimal and, if present, can be easily managed.

How Often Should a Person with HIV See a Medical Provider?

Everyone living with HIV should have an initial medical work-up. This includes: a physical exam; laboratory testing; treatment adherence counseling; preventive screenings; and referral to other supportive services. Early in care, the person should have an appointment at least once every four months. Appointments may be more frequent if the person has symptoms or has not achieved viral suppression. Once a person is virally suppressed and is feeling healthy, the person should see his or her medical provider once every four to six months.

How can a person access HIV treatment and support services?

HIV testing is the only way to know if a person has HIV. If a person tests positive, the provider will arrange an appointment for HIV medical care. People living with HIV who were in medical care and stopped, can contact the provider they saw in the past or find a new provider in the AIDS Institute's *HIV Regional Resource Directory*. Financial help is available for people who do not have health insurance. Call HIV Uninsured Care Programs at 1-800-542-2437.

Attending regular HIV care appointments and adhering to HIV treatment helps promote health for people with HIV. It also reduces the chance that HIV will be passed to others. By taking HIV treatment, or supporting a friend or family member in getting HIV care, people can play an important role in New York's plan to end the epidemic.