



FAQ

What is U=U?

U=U is shorthand for **Undetectable = Untransmittable**. U=U means that people living with HIV who take medication daily to control the virus and remain virally suppressed can't pass HIV through sex.

Here's how it works: When you take medication daily to treat HIV, you stop the virus from multiplying. When HIV can't multiply freely, it leads to less circulating virus in your body. The amount of virus in your body is called the **viral load**. When you have a very low viral load – less than 200 copies per milliliter of blood – HIV becomes undetectable in your body. According to current research, maintaining an **undetectable** viral load for at least six months means you cannot transmit or pass HIV to partners when having sex. That means that HIV is **untransmittable**.

What does Undetectable mean?

Undetectable means there is so little HIV in your body it cannot be measured by a test. To stay undetectable, you must continue to take your HIV medication everyday as prescribed because if you stop, HIV will start to multiply, and your viral load will increase. Talk to your health care team about side effects, or anything else that makes it difficult for you to take your medication. They can work with you to make taking your medicine as easy and worry-free as possible.

What is Treatment as Prevention?

Treatment as Prevention is another way of saying that treatment of HIV with medication not only keeps you healthy but also prevents passing HIV to others during sex. In other words, taking your HIV medication daily helps you protect your health, and the people you care about too.

How do I get undetectable?

If you have HIV, take your medication daily as prescribed by your health care team. For many people, this can be as simple as one pill once a day. After you start taking HIV medication, you should see your doctor regularly so they can retest your blood and let you know when you are undetectable. Once you have stayed undetectable for at least six months, you can feel confident that you cannot pass the virus to others through sex.

Sometimes circumstances in our lives can make reaching and maintaining an undetectable viral load very difficult. If you have something going on in your life that might prevent you from either taking your medication or making it to your clinic appointments, talk to your health care team about it. They can connect you to services and resources that you may find useful and help you reach your HIV treatment goals.

How do we know that U=U is true?

Four different large scientific studies (HPTN 052, PARTNER, PARTNER 2, and Opposites Attract) followed and observed male-female and male-male couples where one person was living with HIV and the other person was not. Throughout these studies, after over 100,000 instances of sex without condoms, both anal and/or vaginal sex, not one person living with HIV who was undetectable for at least six months and taking HIV medication daily as prescribed passed HIV to their negative partner.

What if I want to have kids?

U=U protects you and your partner, and your baby too. If you are planning to get someone pregnant, being undetectable means you won't pass HIV when you share your semen. And if you are pregnant and living with HIV, passing HIV to your newborn is extremely unlikely if you are undetectable prior to becoming pregnant and if you stay undetectable throughout the pregnancy, labor, and delivery. To accomplish this, you need to continue to take HIV medication as prescribed during your pregnancy. It is important to get care for pregnancy at Specialty Centers with providers who have expertise in HIV, perinatal care, and pediatrics all under one roof.

Even with U=U, certain types of infant feeding can make it possible to pass HIV to the baby after birth. This includes breastfeeding and prechewing food for the infant. For this reason, breastfeeding and prechewing food are not recommended for parents living with HIV in the United States. Talk to your health care team about nutrition resources available to assist you and your family.

What should I tell my sex partners who don't have HIV?

Many people find it difficult to have conversations with sex partners about things like HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Knowing that you are not able to pass HIV to your sex partner(s) might make that conversation easier. Tell them what you know about U=U, and how taking your medication daily can protect both of you.

Remember, having an undetectable viral load does not protect against other STDs like syphilis, chlamydia or gonorrhea, and it won't prevent pregnancy. Talk openly with your partner about how you want to have healthy, pleasurable and worry-free sex with each other. This can mean using condoms, birth control, HIV treatment, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), emergency Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) or any combination of these. Together, couples can decide what options are best for them.

What if I am HIV negative?

"PrEP" stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis and is a way for people who don't have HIV to prevent HIV infection by use of medication taken daily. This can be a great option for when you don't know the status of your partner, if you or your partner have multiple partners, if you don't know if your partner can maintain an undetectable viral load, or if you just feel more secure in your sex life with the added protection of PrEP.

Please go to GetProtectedLA.com to find out more about HIV and STD services and resources available in Los Angeles County.