

UNDETECTABLE EQUALS UNTRANSMITTABLE

A person with HIV who is on treatment, has achieved an undetectable viral load and maintains it for six months and thereafter, cannot transmit HIV through sex.

FACTS

- An undetectable viral load means the amount of [human immunodeficiency virus \(HIV\)](#) in a person's system is so low that a test cannot detect it.
- Viral suppression is when a person's HIV viral load is below a specific amount (below 200 copies/mL) that is found to be safe.
- A person who has maintained an undetectable viral load for six months cannot transmit HIV through sex.
- Undetectable status does not prevent transmission of other [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#) or pregnancy. Condoms can prevent STI transmission and routine STI testing is recommended.
- Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U) is a tool that can be used in any relationship and should be discussed with partner(s). Some people still choose to use other prevention methods like condoms or [pre-exposure prophylaxis \(PrEP\)](#). Only you and your partner(s) know what is right for you.

Important Terms

HIV: Human immunodeficiency virus

ART: Antiretroviral therapy

STIs: Sexually transmitted infections that include chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, etc.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How can I reach an undetectable HIV status?

By seeing a health care provider regularly and taking [antiretroviral therapy \(ART\)](#) as prescribed, nearly everyone with HIV can become and remain undetectable. For most people it can take up to six months of consistent ART use to become undetectable. It is important to note that U=U is not a cure. While the virus may not be transmitted to sex partners, it is still present in the body. Work with your doctor to find the medication that works best for you.

2. Can a person with an undetectable HIV viral load transmit HIV?

HIV cannot be transmitted through sex if a person maintains an undetectable status with continued ART. While the virus is still present, the amount is so low that tests cannot detect it. U=U is not yet proven to stop transmission through needle sharing or breast/chestfeeding however, ART reduces the risk.

3. What does U=U mean for my reproductive health?

People with HIV can conceive a baby without using assisted reproduction methods. In couples where partners have different HIV status, having a baby can be difficult. U=U allows people who wish to get pregnant with a positive partner to do so safely. An undetectable viral load dramatically reduces the risk of HIV transmission not only to your partner, but also during pregnancy, birth and breast/chestfeeding. Decisions about breast/chestfeeding should be discussed with a provider. If you do not feel comfortable breast/chestfeeding, there are other [options](#) available for parents who want to feed their baby human milk.

4. If I am undetectable, do I have to tell my partner(s) about my HIV status?

Each state has different legal requirements. In [Michigan](#), the law does not require you to disclose HIV status if you maintain an undetectable viral load and do not have intent to transmit.

5. What happens if I stop taking ART?

When ART is stopped, the virus is no longer controlled. This means that you can pass HIV to sexual partners and your medication may become less effective.