

HIV Viral Suppression Toolkit

Texas HIV Syndicate

The HIV Viral Suppression toolkit consists of the following sections:

1. Introduction: Why viral suppression is important
2. Medication adherence tools
3. Promising and Evidence-based practices
4. Videos, Apps, and web-based tools
5. Strategies for working with clients who have not reached viral suppression
6. Medical Coordination

1. INTRODUCTION

Viral suppression is the process of suppressing or reducing the function and replication of a virus. People with higher viral loads have a greater risk for immune system damage which in turn, leaves the body at risk for opportunistic infections. When discussing antiretroviral therapy (ART) for HIV, a regimen is considered to be highly successful if it reduces a person's viral load to undetectable levels (less than 50 copies/ml). The term "viral load" refers to the number of copies of HIV per mL of blood, i.e., the amount of virus in the blood.

Achieving viral suppression by taking HIV medicines allows people living with HIV to have nearly normal lifespans and greatly reduced chances of transmitting the virus. It is now recommended that persons diagnosed with early disease are initiated on ART, and as these new guidelines are implemented, the prevalence of viral suppression should increase. Currently only 30% of all people living with HIV have achieved viral suppression. However, 76% of people in HIV medical care achieve viral suppression.¹ If ART is discontinued, a person's viral load will likely return to a detectable level. Therefore, to achieve viral suppression, it is important to have clients take their anti-HIV medications exactly as prescribed. This is known as "treatment adherence."

Disparities persist in the estimated rates of new HIV infections. Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) of all races and ethnicity remain the population most profoundly affected by HIV. In 2010, the rate of new HIV infections for Latino males was 2.9 times that for white males, and the rate of new infections for Latinas was 4.2 times that for white females. Young Black/African American MSM aged 13–24 are at highest risk. These groups are the most difficult to engage in care and retain in care. They are less likely to have access to resources that promote health. They are likely to live in poverty and be homeless. In addition, some may not have health insurance or coverage, which might present extra challenges for accessing and maintaining care.

Timely linkage to care and greater frequency of care visits are associated with faster time to viral suppression with implications for individual health outcomes and for secondary prevention. These also lead to an important public health outcome - community viral load suppression. Therefore it is important for all clinicians to be aware of their client's frequency of medical care visits, treatment adherence, and viral load. This tool kit offers clinicians several resources to assist clients in increasing their knowledge about HIV infection, transmission, the importance of consistently taking their medication according to provider directions, maintaining low to no risk behaviors, and overcoming socioeconomic barriers. Getting and keeping people in HIV medical care saves lives. Keeping HIV at a low level helps clients stay healthy and live longer, and greatly reduces the chances of passing HIV on to others.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/hiv-aids-medical-care/index.html>

2. MEDICATION ADHERENCE TOOLS

Screening Tools

- [Adherence Screen](#) (Excel)
- [Readiness to Change Assessment for Medication Adherence](#) (PDF)
 - This tool is not for lay persons to administer. Must know Stages of Change.
- **TARGET Center:** [Stage 1: HIV Readiness Assessment](#)
 - Clinician assessment tool to assess client readiness to engage in HIV-related medical care, adhere to regimens and medication readiness.
- **TARGET Center:** [Adherence Follow Up Plan](#). Main page: [Adherence](#)
 - One-pager to help clients adhere to treatment regimens. Space provided to document important information for client.

Surveys

- **TARGET Center HIV Medication Knowledge Surveys**

Series of one-page surveys to assess client understanding. Medication Survey Page 1 only. [HIV Knowledge Surveys](#)

- **Medication Adherence Assessments**

Client-administered assessment tools to assist clinicians in working with clients on adherence to medication regimens.

- [Medication Adherence Assessments](#)
 - Part I is a client-administered assessment tool to assess readiness to undertake antiretroviral therapy.
 - Part II is for patients presently on medications

FAQ for clients

- [Fact Sheet: Undetectable Viral Load](#)
- [Fact Sheet: CDC Vitalsigns](#)
- HIV care saves lives – Viral suppression is Key. Website has printable & email version
- [Word on the Street: Advice on Adhering to HIV Treatment](#)
 - People living with HIV and HIV experts talk about why adherence is important and share strategies for ensuring clients remember to take their medications. Stories from PLWH on how they manage medication. Website has printable & email version.

- [HIV In Site](#)
 - Drug Dosing Toolkit. Information on dosing schedules, side effects, and tips on taking medications. List of medications by brand name and generic name.

3. PROMISING and EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

- [Complete Listing of Medication Adherence Evidence-Based Behavioral Interventions \(CDC\)](#)
- [Listing of All Medication Adherence Interventions, by Characteristic \(CDC\)](#)
- [Effective Interventions-Medication Adherence: Every Dose Every Day \(CDC\)](#)
 - *Strategies to improve HIV medication adherence*
 - *A New Medication Adherence e-learning Training Toolkit for Providers*
 - *4 Medication adherence Strategies approved for e Learning Courses*
- [Interactive and media rich e-Learning training on \(CDC\)](#)
 - Benefits of ART adherence
 - Components of each adherence strategy
 - Key players, staff roles and responsibilities
 - Overview of session content
 - Strategy in action (e.g., videos of sessions)
 - Integrating the strategy into practice
- [A Guide to CBO Adherence Programs](#)
 - Ideas for agencies setting up adherence programs/services. Features barriers to adherence and techniques for overcoming them, along with profiles of select agencies and their adherence programs.
- [Connecting to Care: Addressing Unmet Need in HIV](#)
 - Workbooks describe ways to help connect people living with HIV/AIDS to medical care and activities developed and implemented.

Sub-populations

- Substance abuse
 - [\(SAMHSA\) Treatment Improvement Protocols \(TIP\)](#)
 - **TARGET Center.** [Stages of Change Patient Readiness Scale](#). One-pager poses question to client, "How Ready are You for the Challenge of Taking Your HIV Medications Everyday" followed by a scale for patient to self-assess their readiness.

- **TARGET Center. Long-Term Medication Behavior Self-Efficacy Scale.** Client self-assessment tool to determine patient's confidence in taking medications under various scenarios (e.g., at work, in public place). Tool is designed to assess likelihood of adherence to antiretroviral regimens.

4. VIDEOS and APPS and WEB-BASED TOOLS

Videos

- **[HIV: the Goal of Undetectable*](#)**
Undetectable means there is so little HIV in your blood that it cannot be measured by a test. See how getting to undetectable can help you protect your health and the people you care about.
- **[HIV: What's Going on Inside Your Body*](#)**
You may look fine. You may feel fine. But the virus is working away, causing harm to the body. That is the trick HIV plays. Watch this video to see what HIV does and how treatment can help.
- **[Viral Load and Monitoring](#)**
This animation describes how viral load is measured by your doctor and clinic, and what a high versus low viral load can mean over time with respect to virus reproduction and treatment.
- **[Adherence and Resistance Issues with HIV Drug Treatment](#)**
This animation describes how adhering to your prescribed medication schedule is beneficial and minimizes the risk that your HIV will develop resistance to your medical treatment.
- **[Free HIV/AIDS Videos -Many Languages and Topics](#)**

Apps

- **[HIV ANSWERS](#)**
 - Get answers
 - Start treatment
 - Talk to doctors
 - Keep track of health information

Download from the App Store or Google play for a mobile device. You can also see this on a computer.

- **[Your PSH](#)**

- Your Personal Sexual Health is an app that promotes safer, healthier sexual health paired with HIV/STD testing & prevention.

Download from the App Store or Google play

- [iPhone](#)

- ***THE BODY- The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource***

My Health Tracker. Helps organize your HIV treatment information privately and securely in one place. Track your CD4 count, viral load, medications, and more. [App for iPhones and Androids.](#) [Medication and Health Reminders](#)

Web-based

- **[STOP THE VIRUS](#)**

Web-based educational resources from Gilead

- **[Positively!-A web-based program about HIV](#)**

This interactive education tool contains HIV self-management videos, testimonials, and animation to provide key messages about HIV.

Topics:

- Getting Started
- Newly HIV-Positive
- How People Get HIV
- HIV In the Body
- How HIV Medication Works
- Managing HIV
- HIV and Real Life

Contains:

- Video
- Self-check

- Resources

5. STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH CLIENTS WHO HAVEN'T REACHED VIRAL SUPPRESSION and REMINDERS

Working with clients not virally suppressed

Client Handouts & Resources

- Helpful handouts from the CDC

[A Support Partner Can Help](#) - PDF (224 KB)

[About Your Viral Load and CD4](#) - PDF (219 KB)

[Why Medication Saves Lives](#) - PDF (232 KB)

[Take Your HIV Medicine Correctly](#) - PDF (240 KB)

[Why People Miss Their Doses](#) - PDF (223 KB)

[Every Dose Every Day \(E2D2\) Fact Sheet](#)

- [***HIV/AIDS Training: Greeting the Patient and Starting the Session***](#). Training video of basic counseling skills for lay counselors working with ARV adherence and how to start a client session.
- ***Architectural Choice***. A short informative video on architectural choice by Dr. Punin Keller. Architectural choice is the technique of designing health messages in ways that make the choices we would like the clients to engage in more appealing. The video is on the S:\HIV train drive under the directory “conference videos”.

Medication Reminders (apps)

- [**RxmindMe Prescription/Medicine Reminder & Pill Tracker by Walgreens**](#)
- [**Medisafe Pill Reminder & Medication Tracker**](#)
- [**My health apps**](#)
- **Oregon Reminders**. Set customized reminders (SMS, email and voice) for regular HIV testing, daily medication reminders, and prescription refill reminders.
- **MyMeds by MyMeds, Inc.** Download from iTunes
- **MyMed Schedule by MedActionPlan**. Medication schedule reminder program with pictures of your pills. Download from iTunes

- [**Med Helper-Pill Reminder and Medication Tracker**](#). Keeps track of Rx, alarm reminders, alerts when meds are running low. Download from iTunes
- [**Simple Pill Tracker**](#). Keep track and manage your pills. Download from iTunes

6. MEDICAL COORDINATION

Tools

- [**NYC Health: The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**](#)

Website contains tools, and educational materials for HIV-related health care and care coordination for HIV-infected persons.

Spanish and English. Care Coordination Program Manuals & Tools

Care Coordination Guides and Other Print Materials

Health Promotion Facilitator's Guide

Care Coordination: [How We Can Help](#)

Care Coordination Workbook

Provider Pocket Guide

Care Coordination Program Manual

- [**County of Los Angeles Public Health: Division of HIV and STD Programs**](#)

Resources for Medical Care Coordination

Adherence Training Manual

Readiness to Engage in HIV Care Tool

Readiness to Adhere to ART (English/Spanish)

This resource is made possible by the Texas HIV Syndicate Viral Suppression priority group.

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