

PREVENTING HIV TRANSMISSION

Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U)
for Health Professionals

What is U=U?

Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U)

communicates the scientific consensus that HIV cannot be sexually transmitted when a person living with HIV takes and adheres to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and maintains a viral load of less than 200 copies/ml (measured every 4-6 months).^{1,2,3,4,5,6}



KEY FACTS



Regular viral load testing every 4 to 6 months is the only way to know if an individual has reached and maintained viral suppression.



Condoms or [pre-exposure prophylaxis \(PrEP\)](#) are not needed to prevent HIV transmission when a person is virally suppressed. Condoms are still best practice to prevent other sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancy.



U=U applies only to sexual transmission. It does not apply to sharing drug use equipment, or during pregnancy, breastfeeding, or chestfeeding.



A person with a low amount of HIV is not cured of HIV. However, people who take their HIV treatment consistently can live a long healthy life.



HIV antiretroviral medication coverage differs by province and territory. For more information, see a [Summary: HIV antiretroviral medication coverage in Canada](#).

KEY TERMS

Viral load

The amount of HIV in the blood.

Viral suppression

A viral load less than 200 copies/ml of blood with consecutive measurements every 4 to 6 months.

Undetectable

A viral load that cannot be detected by standard tests. The specific threshold for what is considered “undetectable” may vary depending on the type of test. When referring to U=U, viral suppression and undetectable are used synonymously.

Untransmittable

HIV cannot be transmitted sexually when a person achieves viral suppression (or has an undetectable viral load).



Make U=U part of your practice

Integrating U=U into routine HIV care has several benefits...



Improved health and well-being

When patients know about U=U, they are more likely to initiate and adhere to treatment, which leads to better health outcomes.



Preventing transmission

Effective treatment prevents HIV from being passed on and reduces new infections.



Improved patient relationships and reduced stigma

Discussing U=U as part of regular sexual health messaging can help change the way people think and talk about HIV by enabling conversations about sex without fear or shame.



Empowerment

U=U empowers people living with HIV to have control of their well-being and make informed choices about their sexual health.

For more information, visit Canada.ca/HIV.

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