

HOW ARE HIV AND AIDS TREATED?

Antiretroviral therapy means treating viral infections like HIV with drugs. The drugs slow down replication of the virus. When replication slows down, so does the disease process. Once the viral replication is under control, the body begins its work at attempting to restore the immune system damaged by the HIV virus.

It was once hoped that new antiviral medications would eliminate the HIV virus from the body. We now know that this does not happen. The virus is always present in some cells of the body, even when "undetectable" by laboratory measures.

We have learned that three antiviral medications are necessary to control the level of virus and to prevent mutations. These are called "AIDS cocktails".

Sometimes these cocktails include many separate pills. Other times the medications are combined into one or two pills.

Your HIV physician has three groups of medications to prescribe for HIV infection at this time.

The first class of drugs, the nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors, are also called "nukes". These are the oldest medications and still provide the backbone of most antiviral regimens.

The next group of medications are the NNRTI, the "non-nukes". Sustiva and

Viramune are the most common examples.

The third class of antiretroviral drugs are called the protease inhibitors, or "PI"s. These medications changed the course of HIV and AIDS therapy, allowing millions of people to live with their HIV disease.

Nucleoside RT Inhibitors	Non-Nucleoside RT Inhibitors	Protease Inhibitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrovir or AZT • Zerit or d4T • Efavir or 3TC • Ziagen • Tenofovir • Combivir • Trizivir 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rescriptor • Sustiva • Viramune 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaletra • Viracept • Norvir • Crixivan • Videx • Agenerase • Fortovase • Invirase

Currently, studies are being performed for entirely new classes of HIV medications that will be available in the future.

In addition, studies and protocols are being developed for once-a-day medications. This is not appropriate for all patients.

If the person's HIV infection is advanced and has significantly affected the individual's level of immunity, physicians will prescribe medications to attempt to prevent the patient from getting opportunistic infections such as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia.



Nebraska AIDS Education and Training Center

A collaboration of University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska AIDS Project

For more information on transmission, you may call the Nebraska AIDS Hotline at 1-800-782-AIDS or Nebraska AIDS Project at 402-552-9260. HIV/AIDS Basic Trainings or in-services on specific topics are available through the Nebraska AIDS Education and Training Center.