

How treatment works / NAM.

Contributors

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the basics

how treatment works



HIV treatment helps you stay well by reducing the amount of HIV in your body.



All anti-HIV drugs try to prevent HIV infecting new cells. But different types of drugs do this in different ways.

A combination of two different types of drugs provides a powerful attack on HIV.

The aim of treatment is an **'undetectable viral load'** – very low levels of HIV in the blood.



Here's how HIV infects cells in the body. The different drugs interfere with different parts of the process.

1

HIV attaches itself to a CD4 cell. CD4 cells are an important part of our immune system, the body's defence system.



Drugs called **'entry inhibitors'** try to stop this happening.

2

Inside the cell, HIV changes its structure.



Drugs called **'nukes'** and **'non-nukes'** prevent this.

3

HIV hides itself deeper in the cell.



'Integrase inhibitors' stop this happening.

4

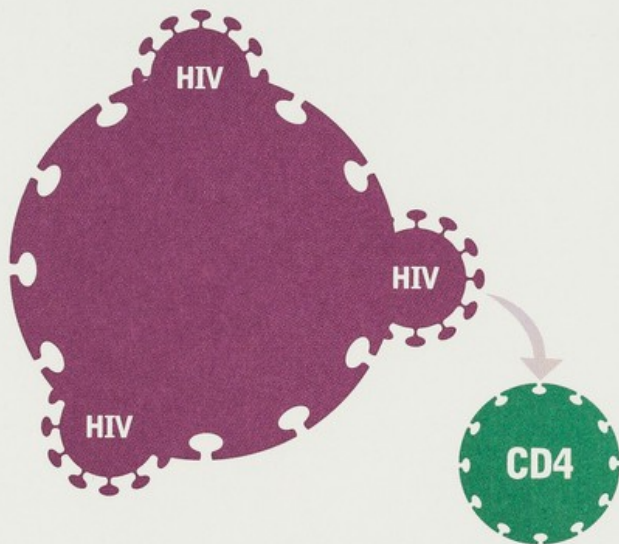
More HIV is produced.



The **'protease inhibitor'** (PI) drugs try to prevent this happening.

5

The new HIV pushes out from the cell, and moves on to find other cells to infect.



Important points

- Each type of drug blocks HIV in a different way.
- We take a combination of several drugs to give a strong attack on HIV.
- The aim of treatment is to have as little HIV as possible.

Notes

Entry inhibitors

- These include CCR5 inhibitors and fusion inhibitors.

'Nukes' and 'non-nukes'

- The correct scientific name for 'nukes' is nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs, for short). The scientific name for 'non-nukes' is non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs).
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Want to find out more?

For more information on this topic:

- read NAM's fact sheets 'HIV treatment' and 'HIV lifecycle'
- read Terrence Higgins Trust's booklet 'Your Treatment', or
- speak to an adviser at THT Direct (phone: 0845 12 21 200).

For more information about HIV, NAM provides free fact sheets, information booklets, e-mail bulletins, a monthly newsletter, a comprehensive website (aidsmap.com) and a website specifically for people living with HIV (namlife.org).

Contact us by calling 020 7840 0050 or by sending an e-mail to info@nam.org.uk

Has this resource been useful to you? Please let us know what you think by visiting www.aidsmap.com/feedback, by phoning us or by sending an e-mail. Your feedback helps us to improve the services we offer you.

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