

The risk of not taking ARV's everyday at close to the same time:

Poor adherence occurs when we often take our pills too late, when we forget to take a dose, when we do not take all of our pills or when we stop the treatment because we are feeling better, etc.

First consequence of bad adherence: DISEASES

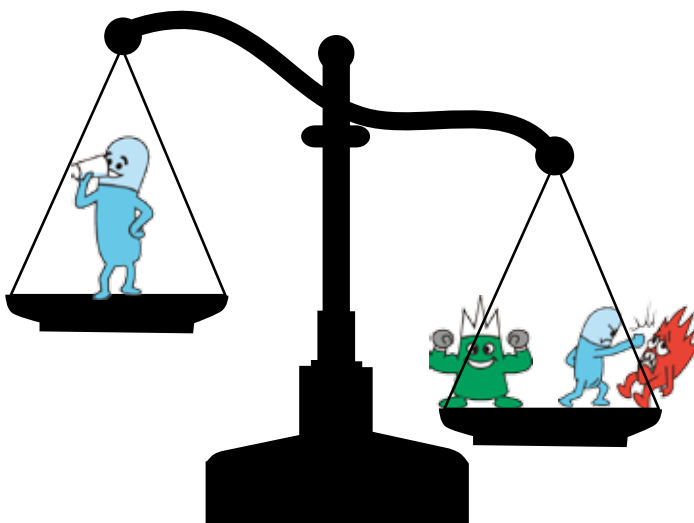
If you do not take your ARVs every day at your chosen time, you will not have enough ARVs in your blood to fight the HIV. So the HIV will multiply again and destroy the CD4, which means you cannot fight off illness and will get sick.

Second consequence of bad adherence: RESISTANCE

If the HIV virus encounters few ARVs in the blood, and multiplies, it can transform itself, and become able to resist the ARV attacks meaning that your ARVs will no longer work to kill your HIV.

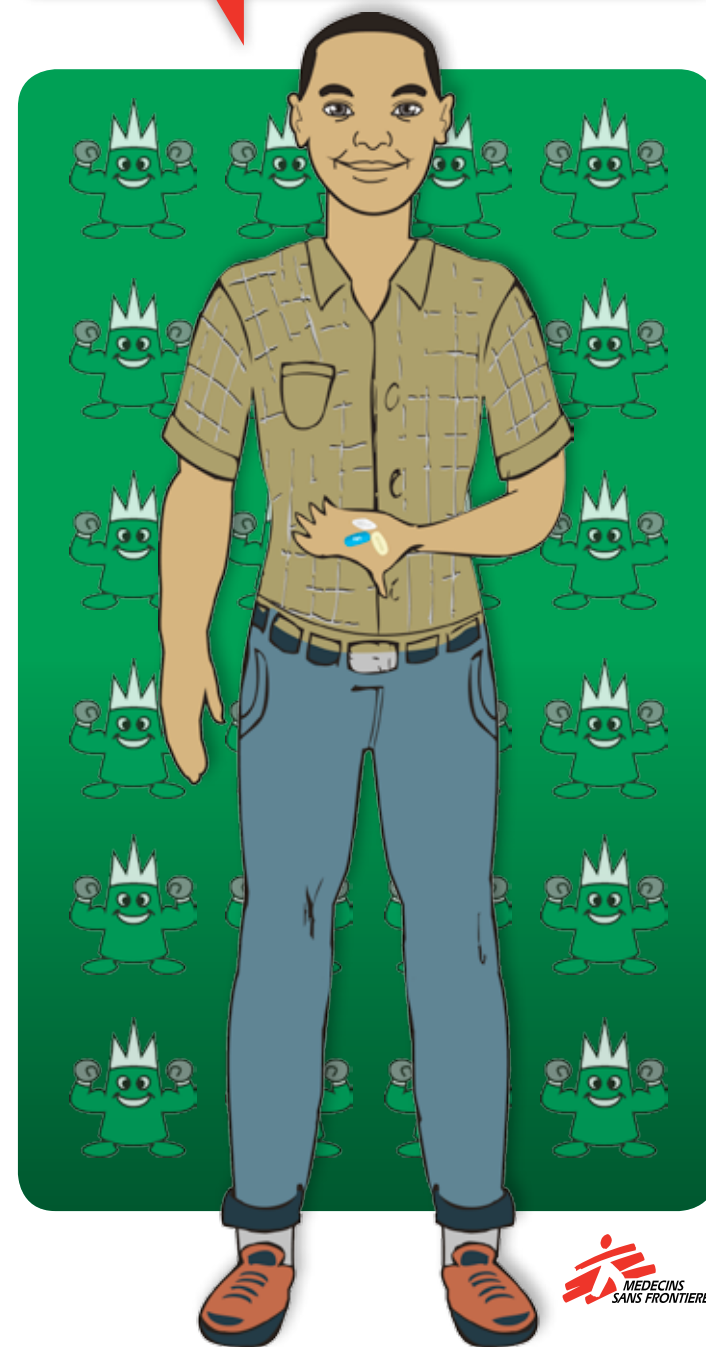
All patients will probably have some light side effects at the start of their treatment. It is normal to experience some nausea, headache, dizziness, diarrhea. They disappear within a few weeks after starting treatment. It is important to continue to take your treatment even if you experience these side effects.

Weight benefits and risks of starting ARV's



Risks	Benefits of ARV's
Having to take medication everyday of your life	Stop HIV from multiplying in the body
Possible side effects	Strengthens the immune system quickly
Risk of drug resistance if you don't take your ARV's correctly	Makes you stronger and healthier
	Less illness and infections
	Less chance of dying
	Less HIV transmission to your partner

I take ARV's at the right time to make my body stronger.



What you need to know about HIV

What are the CD4 and the immune system?

The CD4 are cells that live inside the blood and protect the body against diseases. They are like “soldiers” of your body and they fight against the enemies of your health, the diseases.

All CD4 cells together are the “Army” of the body what we call the immune system.



What does HIV do to the immune system?

What is HIV and HIV multiplication?

HIV is a virus that makes more and more when it enters the body. HIV attacks our CD4 cells, destroying the Immune System (our body’s soldiers).

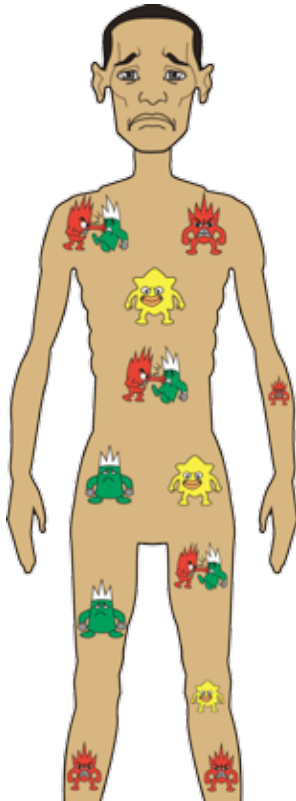


The CD4 count:

The CD4 count is a blood test which measures how strong the immune system is – how much of your body soldiers have been killed.

What does opportunistic infections mean?

When the HIV kills your CD4 cells (body soldiers), diseases can enter into the body and make you sick. We call these opportunistic infections. The most frequent are tuberculosis, diarrhea, skin diseases and others.



When and why to start treatment?

The best time to start taking ARV treatment is right after testing, if you are HIV positive.

The earlier you start your ARV treatment the faster your CD4 count will return to normal and the smaller the chance that you will get sick. Don't wait until you are sick to start ARV treatment!

How taking ARVs can help you?

ARVs are drugs which stop the multiplication of HIV. When HIV stops multiplying in our bodies, our CD4 cells grow again in number making our immune system strong enough to fight off diseases. ARV's will not kill all HIV in the body.

ARV treatment is a combination of 3 different drugs that need to be taken every day for the rest of our lives to keep HIV under control. These three drugs are now available in one pill only; this makes it easier to take ARV treatment regularly.

ART is treatment for life and cannot be stopped and restarted many times. The better you adhere to your treatment, the longer you will live.

The importance of good adherence

How to live with your ARV treatment?

ARV's are to be taken every day as close to the same time as possible according to one's habits: **wake up time, work, school, etc.**

When you miss a dose, you should take the forgotten dose as soon as you remember and then get back to the usual time to take treatment.

It can be a big help to have tell someone about your HIV status. This person could help remind you to take your drugs, be a listening ear, accompany you to the hospital. However, you can start treatment even if you haven't told anyone your status.

Learning a new habit like adhering to treatment takes time and practice. You can have support from the counselor to work with you to help you become good at taking your medication at the same time every day. With time, taking your ARVs will become easier.

