



Facts About HIV Transmission Risks

Experts agree: A person living with HIV who has a sustained, undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit HIV to another person.

- **“There is now conclusive scientific evidence that a person living with HIV who is on antiretroviral therapy (ART) and is durably virally suppressed does not sexually transmit HIV.”**
—National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors, Policy Statement: Risk of Sexual Transmission of HIV from Virally Suppressed People Living with HIV¹
- **“Substantial evidence strongly demonstrates that a person living with HIV who has a sustained, undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit HIV to another person.”**
— AIDS United, Policy Statement on the Risk of HIV Transmission from a Person Living with HIV Who Is on Treatment and Has an Undetectable Viral Load²
- **“Does this work over a long period of time for people who are anxious to be suppressed? The answer is absolutely yes, we now have 10,000 person years (of follow-up) with zero transmissions from people who are suppressed.”**
— Dr. Myron Cohen, Principle Researcher, Treatment as Prevention Study
- **“Suppressing the viral load of a person living with HIV to undetectable levels not only saves their lives but prevents them from infecting others.”**
—Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of NAID, National Institutes of Health³

Treatment as Prevention (TasP)

Today, HIV is most commonly treated with HIV medications called highly active antiretroviral therapy (ART), which combines antiretroviral drugs designed to more effectively treat the virus. ART is highly effective: people living with HIV who consistently follow their

¹ <https://www.nastad.org/blog/statement-risk-sexual-transmission-hiv-virally-suppressed-people-living-hiv>

² https://www.aidsunited.org/data/files/Site_18/Resources/PPC_Risk_HIV_Transmission_statement_Final.pdf

³ https://youtu.be/hdWbqvX0IAE?list=PLMuV5dq7YMFuaMfvhexWqHiFKJ9iiMu_n

treatment plan can reach and stay at the point where their HIV is suppressed and their viral load is clinically undetectable.⁴

Maintaining an undetectable viral load makes it virtually impossible to spread HIV. In a 2011 study involving 1,763 couples in which one partner is HIV-positive and one is HIV-negative, not a single transmission of HIV happened when the HIV-positive partner was virally suppressed.⁵ In a 2016 study involving 1,166 couples and 58,000 condomless sex acts, not a single HIV-negative partner was infected by his or her partner when the HIV-positive partner's HIV was virally suppressed.⁶ Many American and international agencies have recognized that effectively treating HIV-positive people with ART prevents transmission, and have adopted strategies to ensure ART for all people living with the disease.⁷ These strategies are called Treatment as Prevention (TasP) strategies.

We now have a daily pill (PrEP) that can be taken by HIV negative persons to greatly reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

PrEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a way for people who do not have HIV to reduce their risk of sexual transmission of HIV by taking a pill every day.

When used consistently, PrEP greatly reduces the risk of getting HIV. In every study that has tested PrEP's effectiveness, people who used PrEP consistently reduced their the risk of sexual transmission of HIV by more than 90%.⁸ PrEP is even more effective when combined with condom use and other prevention methods.⁹

⁴ HIV/AIDS Care Continuum, *What is the HIV Care Continuum?*, AIDS.GOV (last revised Mar. 6, 2015), <https://www.aids.gov/federal-resources/policies/care-continuum/>.

⁵ HIV Prevention Trials Network, *HPTN 052: A Randomized Trial to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Antiretroviral Therapy Plus HIV Primary Care versus HIV Primary Care Alone to Prevent the Sexual Transmission of HIV-1 in Serodiscordant Couples*, HPTN, <https://hptn.org/research/studies/33> (last visited Jan. 11, 2017).

⁶ Alison J. Rodger, Valentina Cambiano, Tina Bruun, et al., *Sexual Activity Without Condoms and Risk of HIV Transmission in Serodifferent Couples When the HIV-Positive Partner Is Using Suppressive Antiretroviral Therapy*, 316 J. AM. MED. ASS'N 171 (2016).

⁷ Michael Sidibé, the Executive Director of the United Nations' HIV/AIDS prevention initiative, called this new understanding of the link between disease suppression and disease transmission a "game changer" that "will drive the prevention revolution forward." AVERT, *Treatment as Prevention (TasP) for HIV*, AVERT.ORG (last updated Jan. 10, 2017), <http://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-programming/prevention/treatment-as-prevention>. In 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized this information and recommended in its guidelines that everyone living with HIV should be offered ART to promote better health outcomes and combat the spread of the disease. World Health Org., *Consolidated Guidelines on the Use of Antiretroviral Drugs for Treating and Preventing HIV Infection* (June 2016), available at <http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/arv/arv-2016/en/>.

⁸ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, *PrEP Clinical Trials*, CDC.GOV (last updated Feb. 9, 2016), <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/research/biomedicalresearch/prep/index.html>.

⁹ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, *PrEP*, CDC.GOV (last updated Dec. 5, 2016), <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html>.



HIV cannot be transmitted through saliva, urine, or feces.

Many people are not aware that HIV cannot be spread through spitting or through skin contact with urine or feces. The Centers for Disease Control expressly states that “HIV is not transmitted through saliva.”¹⁰ This is because saliva contains chemicals that neutralize the virus and prevent it from spreading.¹¹ In fact, there is no documented case in which HIV was transmitted as a result of an HIV-positive person spitting on someone.¹² Moreover, no case has ever been documented in which HIV was transmitted as a result of a person’s contact with urine or feces.¹³ In numerous studies, researchers have never found HIV in its infectious form in urine or feces samples.¹⁴ In fact, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs expressly states that HIV cannot be spread through urine or feces.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, *HIV Transmission*, CDC.GOV (last updated Dec, 21, 2016), <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/transmission.html>.

¹¹ *Saliva*, NAM AIDSMAP, <http://www.aidsmap.com/Saliva/page/1322841/> (last visited Jan. 11, 2017).

¹² AIDS Institute, *How is HIV Spread?*, AIDS INSTITUTE: AIDS 101, <http://www.theaidsinstitute.org/node/261> (last visited Jan. 11, 2017).

¹³ *Other Body Fluids*, NAM AIDSMAP, <http://www.aidsmap.com/Other-body-fluids/page/1320932/> (last visited Apr. 5, 2017).

¹⁴ See note 13.

¹⁵ U.S. Dep’t of Veterans Affairs, *How Is HIV Spread?*, HIV.VA.GOV (last updated Aug. 9, 2016), <https://www.hiv.va.gov/patient/basics/how-HIV-spread.asp> (“HIV is NOT spread through: tears, sweat, feces, urine.”).