

About Your Viral Load and CD4 Cell Count

5

Facts To Know

Alfredo, living with HIV since 1993

The amount of HIV in your blood is called “viral load.” Viral load shows how fast HIV is reproducing in your body – the lower your viral load, the better. Your “CD4 cell count” measures the health of your immune system. The higher it is, the better your body can fight infections.



1

Taking Every Dose, Every Day is The Key To a Low Viral Load and High CD4 Cell Count.

When HIV medicine keeps the virus under control, your body can make more CD4 cells. Healthy adults usually have 500 to 1800 CD4 cell counts.

2

CD4 Cells Defend Your Body Against Infections and Other Illnesses

Without HIV medicine, too many CD4 cells are destroyed by the virus. The lower your CD4 cell count is, the harder it is for you to stay healthy.

3

An Undetectable Viral Load is the Result You Want From Taking Your Hiv Medication.

Having an undetectable viral load means the amount of virus is so low that it cannot be measured by the blood test. This shows that your medicine is working and has the virus under control.

4

An Undetectable Viral Load Doesn't Mean That You No Longer Have HIV.

Your body can never completely get rid of HIV. It is still there even when lab tests cannot detect it, which means you can still pass HIV to others. For this reason, it is important to take your medicine even when you have an undetectable viral load.

5

HIV Medicine Makes It Harder for the Virus to Make Copies of Itself.

Taking your medicine at the correct time every day keeps the right amount in your body. When you skip doses, the virus can multiply and change so that your medicine no longer works.

Talk to your provider about the importance of taking your HIV medication every day.

For more information go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/living/index.html>

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention
Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention

