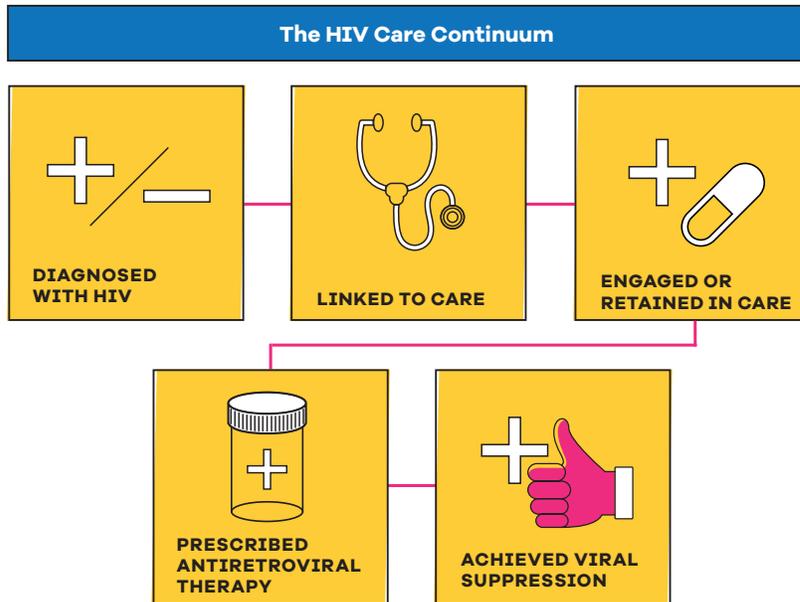


Antiretroviral Therapy and Young People



Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is the use of HIV medicines to treat HIV. Young people living with HIV (YPLWHIV) on ART take a combination of HIV medicines (called an HIV treatment regimen) every day.

ART is recommended for all young people living with HIV. The CDC recommends that young people living with HIV should start ART as soon as possible. Although ART cannot cure HIV, HIV medicines support young people living with HIV thrive.

ART reduces a young person's viral load to an undetectable level. An undetectable viral load means that the level of HIV in the blood is too low to be detected by a viral load test. YPLWHIV who maintain an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV through sex to a

partner that is not living with HIV.

Before starting ART, young people living with HIV should talk to their healthcare provider about the possible side effects of HIV medicines, potential drug interactions between HIV medicines, or between HIV medicines and other medicines a person is taking.

YPLWHIV typically enter adult care by the age of 25. Unfortunately, they remain the the least likely of any age group to be linked to care in a timely manner and the least likely to have a suppressed viral load. This is due to a variety of barriers before, during, and after receiving medical care. These barriers can be psychological (depression, perceived stigma, lack of support), medical (dissatisfaction with medical team, side effects), and logistical (inconvenience, forgetting). Supporting YPLWHIV, through mentorship, to redress these barriers is an essential strategy in helping them to transition and remain adherent to an adult healthcare regimen.

Advocates for Youth believes that:

- Poverty, racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression all contribute to HIV risk and to quality of treatment and care.
- Young people have the right to education and skills to make informed decisions about their sexual health.
- Young people have the right to condoms and medication needed to prevent and treat HIV.
- Young people have the right to confidential, affordable, accessible services.
- Young people are at risk of not receiving medication regularly enough to have their viral load suppressed. We must ensure that all young people have access to accessible and affordable HIV treatment.
- Young people living with HIV have the right to freedom and dignity. Laws which criminalize people living with HIV are founded in ignorance and serve only to divert attention and resources from real strategies to end the epidemic.

Mentors Support Young People to Build Skills that May Close Gaps in

Young People living with HIV typically enter adult care by the age of 25.

BARRIERS WHEN ENTERING ADULT CARE

- Worried about confidentiality, privacy, and trust in adult setting
- Overwhelmed by change, lost in the system
- Afraid to ask for help and support
- Unsure how to make decisions to manage own healthcare

MENTORS CAN:

- CONNECT PERSONALLY
- PROVIDE INFO & GUIDANCE
- SHARE EXPERIENCES

...so that young people living with HIV gain the confidence & skills to manage their own healthcare

Antiretroviral Therapy and Young People

Antiretroviral Therapy Resources:

- advocatesforyouth.org/issue/hiv/
- advocatesforyouth.org/nyhaad
- advocatesforyouth.org/mentorship
- www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/livingwithhiv/treatment.html
- www.WhatWorksInYouthHIV.org/youth-hiv
- www.AIDSVu.org

THINGS TO KNOW:

- **Antiretroviral therapy (ART)** is the use of HIV medicines to treat HIV.
- Young people living with HIV on ART take a combination of HIV medicines (called an **HIV treatment regimen**) every day.
- Although ART cannot cure HIV, HIV medicines support young people living with HIV thrive. ART also reduces the possibility of **HIV transmission**.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- ART reduces a young person's **viral load** to an undetectable level. An **undetectable viral load** means that the level of HIV in the blood is too low to be detected by a viral load test.
- Young people living with HIV (YPLWHIV) who maintain an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV to their HIV-negative partner through sex.
- Before starting ART, young people living with HIV should talk to their healthcare provider about the possible side effects of HIV medicines and potential **drug interactions** between HIV medicines or between HIV medicines and other medicines a person is taking.
- YPLWHIV typically enter adult care by the age of **25**. Unfortunately, they remain the the least likely of any age group to be linked to care in a timely manner and the least likely to have a suppressed viral load.
- Supporting YPLWHIV, through mentorship, to redress these barriers is an essential strategy in helping them to transition and remain adherent to an adult healthcare regimen.