

Your viral load: What you need to know

If you are HIV positive, there's a lot you can do to keep yourself healthy. Picking up your meds, taking meds every day, living a healthy lifestyle and having safe sex are all important parts of living with HIV. But...how do you know if it's working? Are you on track? Are your ARVs doing their job?

The best way to find this out is by having your viral load tested.

Not sure what that means? Let's find out...

What is my viral load?

This is the amount of HIV in your body.

How often is viral load tested?

In your first year of treatment, you should have your viral load tested every 6 months. After that, clinics usually test viral loads once a year. BUT if your viral load is higher than what it should be, then it will need to be repeated sooner.

What should my viral load be?

The aim of ARVs is to get a low viral load (100 or less). The best viral load result is undetectable. It doesn't mean you are HIV negative, but there is so little HIV in your blood that the test can't pick it up.

Getting your viral load tested is the only way to know for sure how much HIV is in your body. And knowing gives you power! Even if your viral load is high, it means you can do something about it. Ask your nurse or doctor when you are getting your next viral load test done, and don't be afraid to remind them when it's time to test. Your life is worth it. To find out more about how to deal with HIV, read our article [I tested positive for HIV, what do I do now?](#)

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