

UNDETECTABLE

Undetectable occurs when a person with HIV is on Anti-retroviral medication and lowers their HIV viral load, which is the amount of HIV virus in the blood, to undetectable. They still have HIV but it cannot be detected by standard tests.

Undetectable
=
Uninfectious

UNINFECTIOUS

Uninfectious. If a person maintains an undetectable viral load for more than six months, this means they are uninfectious and cannot pass the HIV virus to their sexual partners. Using condoms reduces the risk of STI's and pregnancy.

U = U

**HIV Positive
Undetectable
Uninfectious**



[+u]



+BODY POSITIVE→

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CAN A PERSON WITH HIV WHO HAS AN UNDETECTABLE VIRAL LOAD TRANSMIT HIV?

No. A person living with HIV on antiretroviral therapy (ART) with an undetectable HIV viral load in their blood for at least six months has a negligible risk of transmitting HIV to a sexual partner. Negligible means: so small as to not be worth considering; insignificant. Therefore, HIV experts and health educators have described the transmission risk in terms of: “not transmittable”, “no longer infectious”, “zero risk”, “no infection risk”, “do not transmit”, and “cannot transmit”.

WHAT IS AN UNDETECTABLE VIRAL LOAD?

Viral load refers to the amount of HIV in a blood sample of a person living with HIV. Generally, the higher the viral load, the more likely you are to transmit HIV. ART can reduce a person’s viral load to the point where it is so low (usually under 40 copies/ml depending on the test) that it cannot be detected by measurements. This is called ‘having an ‘undetectable viral load,’ which prevents the sexual transmission of HIV while simultaneously improving the health of a person living with HIV. It does not fully clear the virus from the body or cure someone of HIV. Excellence adherence, or taking ART as prescribed, is important to maintain an undetectable viral load.



WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

The conclusion is based on the force of real world and research experience including PARTNER, HPTN 052, Opposites Attract, and the Swiss Statement. For instance, in the most recent study called PARTNER, there were ZERO transmissions out of 58,000 condomless sex acts between people with HIV with undetectable viral loads and their partners who are HIV negative. There have been no confirmed reports of anyone with an undetectable viral load sexually transmitting HIV in these studies.

DOES HAVING AN STI AFFECT THE CHANCE OF HIV TRANSMISSION?

Having an STI is not significant to HIV transmission when the partner with HIV has an undetectable viral load. An STI in the presence of a detectable viral load may increase the risk of HIV transmission.

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HOW OFTEN SHOULD VIRAL LOAD TESTING BE DONE?

Regular viral load testing for health benefits is normally recommended about 2-4 times a year for people who have a stable undetectable viral load. People with HIV who are using an undetectable viral load as an HIV prevention strategy should talk to their providers to see if increased viral load testing is recommended.

IS THE RISK ZERO?

In real world terms, yes the risk is zero. In theoretical terms, the risk is a tiny fraction close to zero. The challenge is that scientific studies can never prove that risk is absolute zero. Through statistical analysis that number will keep getting closer and closer to zero. Researchers agree that because the actual HIV transmission risk is either zero or extremely close to zero, a person with HIV with an undetectable viral load is considered “not infectious” to their sexual partners.

Undetectable = Uninfectious