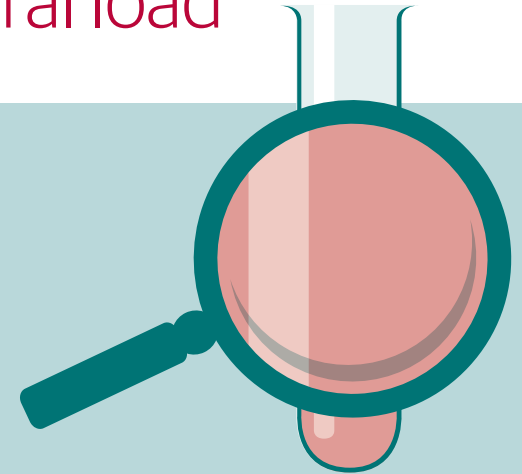


# The basics

## Undetectable viral load



### Notes

#### Why it's good to have an undetectable viral load

- If you have very little HIV, it won't be able to attack and weaken your immune system, which is the body's natural defence system.
- If your immune system is strong, you are less likely to get infections and illnesses.
- An undetectable viral load reduces your risk of passing on HIV.

### Want to find out more?

#### For more information on this topic:

- read NAM's booklet 'Viral load & CD4', or
- speak to an adviser at THT Direct (phone: 0845 12 21200).

For more information about HIV, NAM provides free fact sheets, information booklets, e-mail bulletins, a monthly newsletter, a comprehensive website ([aidsmap.com](http://aidsmap.com)) and a website specifically for people living with HIV ([namlife.org](http://namlife.org)).

Contact us by calling 020 7840 0050 or by sending an e-mail to [info@nam.org.uk](mailto:info@nam.org.uk)

Has this resource been useful to you? Please let us know what you think by visiting [www.aidsmap.com/feedback](http://www.aidsmap.com/feedback), by phoning us or by sending an e-mail. Your feedback helps us to improve the services we offer you.

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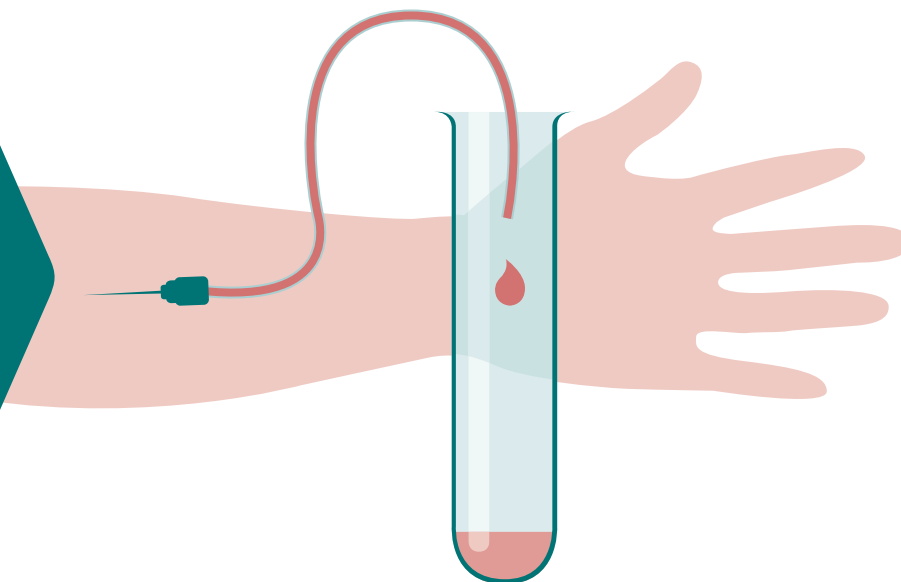
Charity number 1011220



The aim of HIV treatment is to have a viral load that is 'undetectable'.

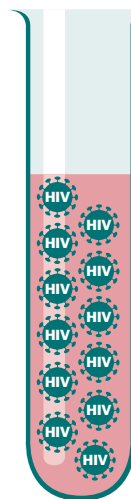
But what does that mean and why is it important?

**1** A viral load test tells you **how much HIV** there is in a drop of blood.



**2** Test results give you a good idea of whether the amount of HIV is high or low.

High



Low

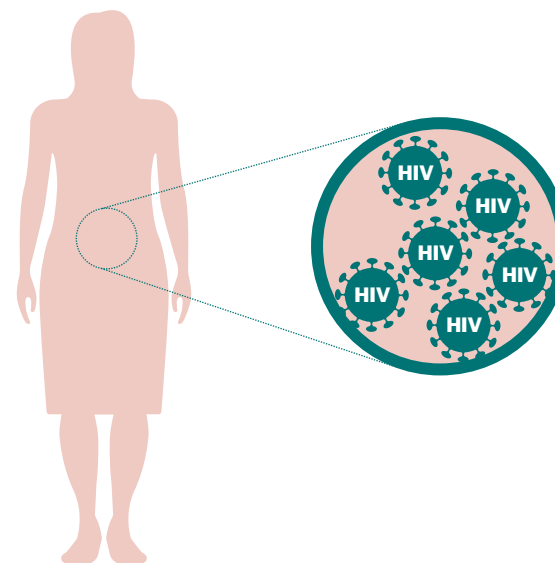


**3** However, the tests can't measure very small amounts of HIV. When you have very little HIV, you will be told that your HIV is 'undetectable'. This means that there was so little HIV in one sample of blood that the test couldn't find any.

Undetectable  
(very low)



**4** It doesn't mean that HIV has disappeared entirely. It will still be present in other parts of your body, like the gut.



### Important points

- If your viral load result is undetectable, there is only a little HIV in the body.
- The aim of HIV treatment is to have an undetectable viral load. This means that your HIV is being kept under control.