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Thanks to all of the professionals and people with HIV who have helped us to develop this leaflet.

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The basics

How treatment works

For more information on this topic

- Read our '[HIV lifecycle](#)' page.
- Read our '[Taking your HIV treatment](#)' booklet.

For information in other languages

- Visit www.aidsmap.com/languages

Other titles in The basics series

- Taking drugs on time
- Health checks
- Side effects

For more information about HIV

- Visit our website www.aidsmap.com
- Speak to an adviser at THT Direct **0808 802 1221**

Has this leaflet been useful to you?

Please let us know what you think. Your feedback helps us to improve the services we offer.

You can contact us to find out more about the scientific research and information we have used to produce this leaflet.

We recommend that you discuss the information in this leaflet with a doctor or other health worker.



HIV treatment helps you stay well by reducing the amount of HIV in your body.

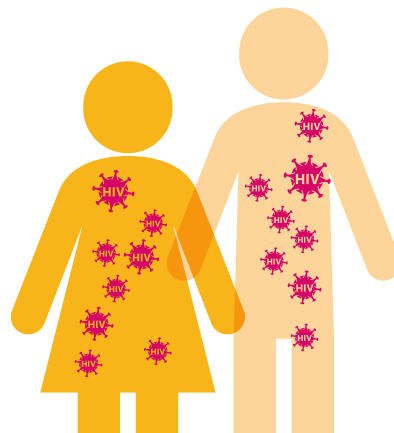
All anti-HIV drugs try to prevent HIV infecting new cells. But different types of drugs do this in different ways.

A combination of two different types of drugs provides a powerful attack on HIV. The aim of treatment is an 'undetectable viral load' – a very low level of HIV in the blood.

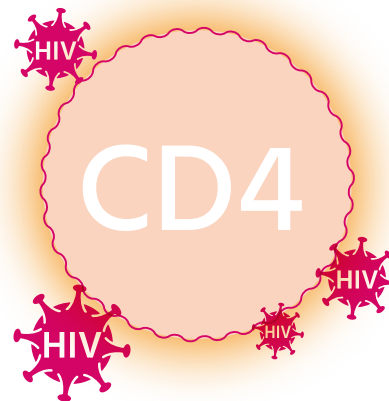


This leaflet explains how HIV infects cells in the body.

The different drugs interfere with different parts of the process.



1 HIV attaches itself to a CD4 cell. CD4 cells are an important part of our immune system, the body's defence system.



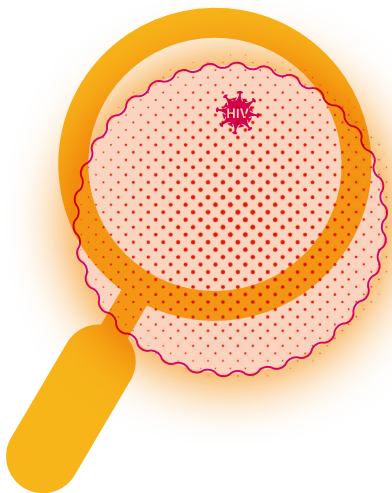
Drugs called 'entry inhibitors' try to stop this happening.

2 Inside the cell, HIV changes its structure.



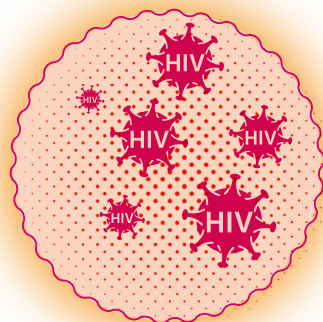
Drugs called 'nukes' and 'non-nukes' prevent this.

3 HIV hides itself deeper in the cell.



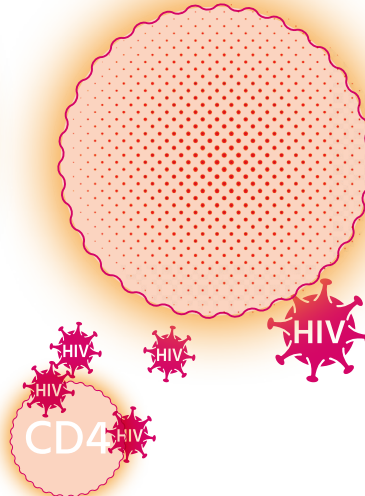
'Integrase inhibitors' stop this happening.

4 More HIV is produced.



The 'protease inhibitor' (PI) drugs try to prevent this happening.

5 The new HIV pushes out from the cell, and moves on to find other cells to infect.



Important points

Each type of drug blocks HIV in a different way.

We take a combination of several drugs to give a strong attack on HIV.

The aim of treatment is to have as little HIV as possible.

Notes

Entry inhibitors

These include CCR5 inhibitors and fusion inhibitors.

'Nukes' and 'non-nukes'

The correct scientific name for 'nukes' is nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs, for short). The scientific name for 'non-nukes' is non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs).