

HOW DO I ADHERE TO MY HIV MEDICINES?

How Do AIDS Drugs Work?

HIV can make millions of copies of itself every day. Antiretroviral drugs cannot kill the virus, but they can significantly slow down the replication process.

What is Resistance?

HIV is sloppy when making copies of itself. Many new copies of HIV are slightly different from the original. Those are mutations. "Drug resistance" occurs when HIV is allowed to frequently replicate in the presence of antiretroviral therapy. Some of the mutated viruses do not respond to the antiviral medications like the person's original virus. If enough of the resistant viruses are present, the individual will stop responding to antiviral medications. To slow down drug resistance, a person must keep the number of viral particles in his or her body to a minimum.

How Much Adherence is Enough?

Adherence means taking your medications fully and correctly. Research studies have found that for the best viral load results, people must take 90% to 95% of their pills

correctly. If you take pills three times a day, this means that you shouldn't miss more than one dose a week.

Take Your Medications: Make it Easy on Yourself!

Taking medications every day is difficult for everyone! Tell your doctor about your daily schedule so you can choose the medications that will be easiest for you to take.

- Make sure you understand your medications:
 - Which medications to take
 - How many pills to take, and how many times a day
 - Whether to take your pills with food or on an empty stomach
 - How to store your pills
 - Side effects you might have and what to do about them
- Plan ahead so you don't run out of any of your medications.
- Use a pillbox and count your pills out ahead of time.
- Set a timer or alarm to go off when you have to take pills.
- Ask family and friends to help you remember!



Nebraska AIDS Education and Training Center

A collaboration of University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska AIDS Project

For more information on transmission, you may call the Nebraska AIDS Hotline at 1-800-782-AIDS or Nebraska AIDS Project at 402-552-9260. HIV/AIDS Basic Trainings or in-services on specific topics are available through the Nebraska AIDS Education and Training Center.