

USEFUL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ANTIRETROVIRAL TREATMENT EFFICIENCY

- Antiretroviral medication does not cure or eliminate the HIV infection. These pharmaceutical drugs act to stop the virus from multiplying and help the immune system recover (defences).
- You find yourself in a new situation. It is possible that you will need emotional support or psychological assistance. There are healthcare professionals or ONGs where you can turn.
- The relationship with your doctor is fundamental. Choose a professional with whom you feel comfortable. Consult them about the most adequate treatment for you and that best adapts to your lifestyle. It is recommendable that the same professional sees you each time you visit the hospital.
- The medication is for your own use. What is good for you, might be dangerous for someone else. You can consult your doctor about which options are better in your case.
- Find out all the information about the treatment you are going to follow: side effects, number of pills per day, frequency, dietary restrictions, etc.
- To be effective, the pills need to be taken as prescribed by your doctor. If you reduce the treatment or skip doses, HIV could develop resistance to these drugs and even ones you have not yet taken, therefore making them useless.
- Given the complexity of treatment, it is possible to forget. Try to find a system to help you remember like putting an alarm, or a note in a strategic place, or ask someone to remind you to take your pills and always take the treatment with you in a pillbox just in case something happens.
- To improve the absorption and maintain the optimum level in the body, some treatments need to be taken with or without food at a specific time and frequency. For this reason, it is important to respect the schedule, as much as the intake of food when taking the pills. However, if you miss the schedule, take the medication as soon as possible. Consult your doctor about how to return to your schedule to avoid a possible duplication of the doses.

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- If you vomit in the hour after taking the dose, take the pills again when you feel a little better. If this happens habitually, consult your doctor to find a solution.
- If you have to take the medication on an empty stomach, remember to take it at least an hour before eating or two hours after finishing.
- If you go away for the weekend or on holiday, you should take with you more medication than necessary just in case something happens.
- Do not take other medications without first consulting your doctor or hospital pharmacist. They could interact with the drugs you are taking.
- Some side effects such as nausea, diarrhoea or tiredness can disappear after a few days or weeks. However, if symptoms persist or worsen, consult your doctor.
- If you urgently need to go to the Hospital Emergency Room or need to stay overnight in hospital, take the medication and drug information leaflets with you.
- If you leave treatment or change medication, it is recommendable to return the unnecessary medication to the Hospital Pharmacy.
- For whatever reason you decide to abandon the treatment, consult your doctor beforehand.