

## TREATMENT EDUCATION / ADHERENCE

**Missing doses of your HIV medication can seriously harm the effectiveness of your HIV treatment by reducing the level of drug in your body so that it no longer suppresses the virus, allowing HIV to become resistant to the drug. Drug resistance can reduce your treatment options in the future. Taking medication improperly, like doubling up on a missed dose, can create toxicity by having too much drug in the body at once. Services to help you understand and stick to your medication are available throughout Los Angeles County.**

When you take your medication consistently and correctly, you are practicing treatment adherence and you improve your chances that the treatment will succeed.

Before beginning HIV treatment, you and your doctor should work together to find a treatment regimen that best fits your lifestyle. Today, there are many once-a-day treatment options available or simplified regimens for twice a day dosing. Be honest with your doctor about anything that may prevent you from taking your medication properly. Other service providers are also available to educate you on medication and adherence, including treatment educators, medical case managers and social workers.

### [Am I Ready for Treatment?](#)

Before you begin any treatment, it is very helpful to understand what drugs you are taking and how to take them correctly. Some drugs need to be taken with food while others should be taken on an empty stomach. It is important that you can commit to daily dosing and that you can adhere to your medication schedule, whether it is taking your pills with a regular meal or before bedtime.

Your doctor should provide you with all the information you need before making the decision to start treatment. If you do not completely understand a new treatment regimen, ask your doctor to explain. If that explanation is unclear, ask for clarification.

You must inform your doctor of any over-the-counter (non-prescription) medication you may be taking. Some of these medications may interfere with your HIV treatment.

You should be aware of common side effects you may experience when starting treatment or any adverse affects that may not be common, but that could occur while taking your medication.

A treatment educator can meet with you one-on-one to review your current treatment regimen, if you have one, and discuss other treatment options.

Your pharmacist should be able to answer questions about your HIV medication and any drug-drug interactions with other drugs you may be taking.

### [What Can I Expect from a New Treatment?](#)

*Here are some questions about any new HIV treatment you should be able to answer:*

- What is the correct dosage?
- When must I take the medication?
- Do I need to take the medication with food?
- What side effects may occur? If they occur, what do I do?
- How do I know if I am having an allergic reaction to a drug?

### What Services are Available?

There are services throughout Los Angeles County that can help you improve your treatment adherence. They may include one-on-one education sessions or workshops in a group setting. *These services may include:*

- Adherence education, where you can learn ways to stick with your medication routine
- Information including where and how to access medication
- Information on clinical trials for medication that may be new, promising and work in new ways
- Education on the possible side effects of your medication and how to reduce them

If you realize that you have skipped a dose of your medication, do not panic. Take your next scheduled dose without doubling up on your meds. If you miss more than one dose, alert your treatment educator or doctor.

Your treatment educator and doctor can help you decide what medications and tools fit your lifestyle and can help you maintain good adherence.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit [www.hivla.org](http://www.hivla.org) for the most up-to-date Treatment Education listings.

- Consult with your doctor or treatment educator
- Attend Community forums related to HIV
- Ask others with HIV who are treating their virus successfully about their own adherence habits

**If treatment education and adherence counseling services are not delivered appropriately, please contact OAPP's warmline @ (800) 260-8787.**