

ART – What's new



The British HIV Association (BHIVA) produces medical guidelines about HIV treatment.

This is one of four leaflets about the 2015 guidelines on antiretroviral treatment (ART). This is leaflet 4 of 4.

What's new in the 2015 guidelines:

- When to start ART, and new choices of drugs.
- HIV and women.
- Adolescents and young adults (aged between 10 and 24).
- HIV and later life (aged 50 and over).

Key for the strength of guideline recommendations

! Strongly recommended. This advice should almost always be followed.

○ A recommendation based on less evidence. It might apply in some situations.

GPP A recommendation based on expert opinion. Even with limited evidence, this is something most doctors should follow. GPP stands for "good practice point".

Important recommendations in the guidelines

Starting treatment

! Starting ART is recommended at any CD4 count, including over 500. Earlier ART reduces the risk of both HIV and non-HIV related illness.

What drugs to start with

○ Efavirenz (and Atripla) has been replaced by rilpivirine as a preferred drug when starting ART. Some older HIV drugs have been dropped completely. Combined formulations are not prioritised over individual drugs.

Women

! The guidelines recommend that women start ART to reduce the risk of serious illness. This is the same as the general guidelines. ART is as safe and effective for women as for men, although there is limited evidence from studies.

GPP Some oral contraceptives and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can interact with HIV drugs. Your doctor can talk about other ART or dose changes. Talk to your doctor if you're thinking of having a baby. BHIVA produce separate guidelines for HIV and pregnancy: www.bhiva.org/guidelines.aspx

Adolescents and young adults

An adolescent is defined as being aged between 10 and 19.

A young adult is defined as being aged between 20 and 24.

The guidelines look at two different aspects of ART:

1. If you were born with HIV.

The guidelines recommend talking to your doctor about getting the support you need to take ART. Being on ART will stop you getting serious illnesses. Talk about how your care will be looked after when changing from the children's to the adult's clinic.

2. If you tested positive when you were old enough to have sex.

The guidelines emphasise that being a teenager is not easy for most people. Talking to your doctor about having sex and how HIV fits in with your life is important. Let your doctor know when things are not easy.

GPP Efavirenz is not recommended as one of your meds. It could change your mood, or sense of wellbeing.

Later life

! ART is recommended for people older than 50, as in the main guidelines. You and your doctor should talk about changes to your health that come in later life. This may include additional monitoring and treatment.

Older age is a risk factor for many health problems including high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease. Taking additional drugs can be difficult and your doctor can help with this. Drug interactions with ART need to be checked by a specialist.

The other three leaflets on the 2015 guidelines are:

1. Overall ART guidelines for HIV.
2. Changing ART. Including viral rebound, drug resistance and adherence.
3. ART and other health issues like cancer, TB and poor mental health.

Further information and support

Community organisations in the UK that produce HIV treatment information and resources include HIV i-Base (i-Base.org.uk) and NAM (aidsmap.com).

About BHIVA

BHIVA is an organisation for health professionals in the UK. Members include doctors, nurses, researchers, pharmacists and community advocates. Since 1995, BHIVA has been committed to providing excellent care for people living with and affected by HIV.

BHIVA is a national advisory body on all aspects of HIV care and provides a national platform for HIV care issues. To help promote and monitor high standards of care, BHIVA publishes a range of clinical guidelines: www.bhiva.org/guidelines.aspx

Information about how BHIVA guidelines are developed: www.bhiva.org/ClinicalGuidelines.aspx

