

## FAQS: RESISTANCE, CD4 AND VIRAL LOAD

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### What is HIV drug resistance?

**Answer:** Drug resistance is when a drug loses its ability to stop the HIV virus from reproducing.

### How does HIV become resistant?

**Answer:** HIV isn't a perfect virus and thus when replicating itself leads to errors. When the virus reproduces, it makes billions of copies daily. And many of the new copies contain mistakes, or "mutations"—slightly different versions against which medications may fail to work.

### How can someone be resistant to HIV medications if they have never taken them?

**Answer:** The most likely scenario is that the person they got HIV from may have been on HIV treatment and his or her virus may have become resistant to one or more HIV medications. Transmitted along with HIV was resistance to certain drugs.

### What are treatment options for people with resistance?

**Answer:** Resistance to a drug does not automatically mean you can no longer use it. There are different degrees of resistance. Resistance testing can be used to select the HIV medication most likely to be effective against your virus.

### How can someone prevent resistance or prevent further HIV resistance?

**Answer:** To reduce a person's risk of becoming resistant to HIV medications, it is important to take medications exactly as prescribed by their doctor.

### What is CD4?

**Answer:** It's a group of white blood cells that help the body fight infections.

### Why is it important to know the CD4 count?

**Answer:** Keeping track of the number of CD4 in a blood sample helps determine the health of the immune system.

### What is viral load?

**Answer:** Viral load is the amount of HIV in a person's blood.

### Why is important to know the Viral Load?

**Answer:** When used in combination with your CD4 count, viral load is extremely useful in determining when to begin or change HIV treatment.

### What does undetectable viral load mean?

**Answer:** An undetectable viral load means that a person's current HIV medications are effectively treating their HIV and has reduced HIV's ability to reproduce. Having an undetectable viral load, however, does not mean that a person is cured and unable to transmit the virus to someone else. It simply means that the level of viral load in a person's blood is below the threshold needed for detection.