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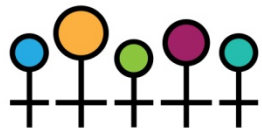
# Adherence

*Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.*

#onewomanatatime

[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

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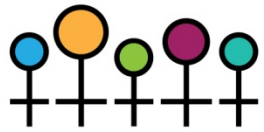


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# Strong Drugs to Fight HIV

***Advances in HIV treatment in past 25 years have led to approval of more than 30 HIV drugs –  
a remarkable accomplishment!***

- Using drugs in effective combinations helps many people control their HIV, live longer and healthier lives
- Despite improvements in HIV drug treatment, taking HIV drugs is still a ***daily, lifelong commitment***



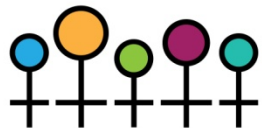
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# What Is Adherence?

*Adherence: Taking your drugs exactly as they are prescribed*

- In order for HIV drugs to do their job properly, you need to do yours!
  - Take correct amount at right times
  - Take drugs as directed

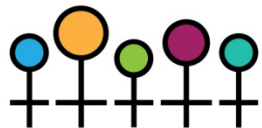




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# Importance of Adherence

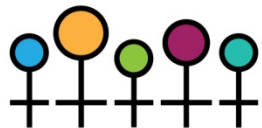
- Drugs get processed by your body, enter your blood stream
  - HIV drugs need to stay in your blood at certain levels to fight HIV
  - If level falls too low, there's not enough drug to fight HIV
  - Taking pills on schedule keeps the right level of drug in your body



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# Adherence and Resistance

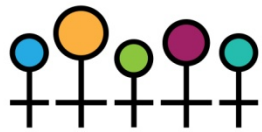
- If you do not take your HIV drugs on schedule
  - Drug levels in your blood will drop
  - HIV will be able to make copies of itself
- When HIV multiplies, viral load increases, CD4 cell count goes down, virus may mutate (change)
- **Resistance:** When HIV mutates, it can survive, even if you're taking your HIV medication



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# Adherence and Resistance

- Cross-resistance: resistance to one drug can cause resistance to others you have not taken
- Resistance can affect your treatment choices in the future
- Some studies suggest you need to take your HIV drugs exactly as prescribed ~95% of the time to get the most benefit
  - That means *missing very few doses*

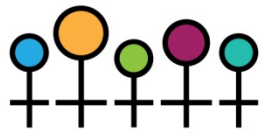


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# Barriers to Adherence for Women

*Women living with HIV can face numerous challenges to taking their medicine as prescribed*

- Women often put others' needs before their own
- Other challenges may include:
  - Depression
  - Active substance use or problems with alcohol
  - Lack of health insurance (women in the US)
  - Lack of safe and stable housing
  - Past or current experience of violence or trauma
  - Other life stressors, such as childcare or parenting issues

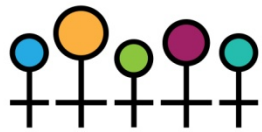


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# Overcoming Barriers

- Despite demands in women's lives, studies show they are just as likely to adhere to HIV regimens as men
- Important to tell health care provider when you miss doses or don't take HIV drugs correctly
- (S)he may suggest a change in dosing schedule or drug regimen
  - Newer HIV drugs and combination drugs require fewer pills per day, have fewer food restrictions

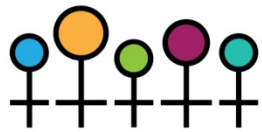




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# Adherence Tips

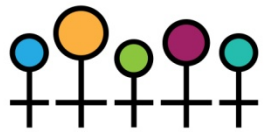
- Understand that medications help you fight virus, stay well
  - If you don't think they will, you won't take your pills correctly
  - If you have doubts, speak to your provider or staff at ASO
- Some women find it helpful to connect their pill-taking with a higher purpose or good intention
- Use daily activity to remind you to take your pills
  - When it is time to do that activity, you'll know that it is also time to take your pills



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# Adherence Tips

- If your kids take medicines/vitamins, consider taking your HIV drugs when they take their medicine
- If substance use/mental health issues prevent you from taking your medications correctly, talk to your provider, case manager
- Take advantage of tools at your clinic or pharmacy: pillboxes, calendars, diaries, beepers to help you remember to take your medications on time
- If you remove labels on pill bottles, be sure to develop a system to help you remember which HIV drugs to take and when
- Plan ahead for refills or trips so you do not run out

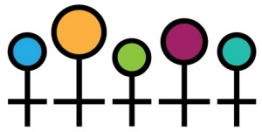


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# Finding Support

- Adherence is hard work
  - *It helps to understand why it is important and to have a support network*
- There are many resources around adherence to HIV drugs

**Adherence is key to ensuring HIV drugs work, maintaining one's health, keeping one's viral load undetectable, and preventing transmission**



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## Learn More!

- To learn more about this topic, please read the full fact sheet:
  - [Adherence](#)
- For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:
  - [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)
  - [www.facebook.com/thewellproject](https://www.facebook.com/thewellproject)
  - [www.twitter.com/thewellproject](https://www.twitter.com/thewellproject)