

# TALK, TEXT, TELL EVERYONE ABOUT U=U

## BACKGROUND

### WHAT IS U=U?

Undetectable equals untransmittable (U=U) is a way of describing the scientific findings from many international research studies about the transmission of HIV. The studies involved thousands of male-female and male-male serodifferent couples (one partner is living with HIV and the other is HIV negative). The partner living with HIV maintained durably undetectable viral loads. Throughout the many years of these studies, the couples engaged in tens of thousands of condomless sex acts. The results showed that when the partner living with HIV maintained durably undetectable viral loads, there was no HIV transmission from the partner living with HIV to the HIV negative partner.

### ARE THE RESULTS CREDIBLE?

The results are widely accepted at the highest levels of expertise in the field including Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO), and health ministries worldwide, including dozens of U.S. public health departments - Maryland Department of Health and Baltimore City Health Department included - and hundreds of organizations from nearly 100 countries.

## TALKING POINTS

### SIMPLY PUT

**Steps to Undetectable = Untransmittable:**

Stay on effective treatment + Get routine viral load tests + Remain connected with healthcare team

**A person living with HIV and maintaining an undetectable viral load:**

CANNOT transmit (pass on/spread) HIV through sex

### KEY PHRASES

It is a scientific fact: undetectable = untransmittable.

There is NO RISK of getting HIV from a partner living with HIV who has a durably undetectable viral load.

Like PrEP or condoms, undetectable is a form of HIV prevention.

HIV treatment is HIV prevention.

# IMPORTANT NOTES

Access to treatment is key to ensuring most underserved individuals with HIV can live a healthy life and stay undetectable.

Remaining in care and on treatment is the best way to reach undetectable levels

## BALTIMORE COMMUNITY CONSENSUS STATEMENT

U=U means that a person with an undetectable HIV viral load who is taking HIV treatment medications as prescribed cannot transmit HIV to a sexual partner. In addition to HIV testing, and using pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and condoms, U=U or undetectable equals untransmittable is another important strategy that adds to sound approaches for helping to achieve zero new HIV infections and reduce stigma for people living with HIV.

It is important that people living with HIV, their sexual partners, healthcare providers and the criminal justice system have accurate information that having an undetectable viral load makes the virus incapable of transmission and that viral load suppression is the goal for all people living with HIV. We stand with leading researchers who have examined this as an effective strategy to prevent transmission to HIV-negative sexual partners.<sup>1</sup>

We recognize that condoms also help prevent HIV transmission as well as other STIs and pregnancy. Today, a person has several options for HIV prevention, and can select one, two or all of them depending on their sexual practices, location, comfort, circumstances and relationships.

Achieving viral suppression, using condoms, regular screening for STIs, using PrEP – all of these need to be available and accessible to people living with and impacted by HIV. It allows all people regardless of gender and across jurisdictions to make the best-informed decision for how to take care of their own physical, sexual, emotional, and mental health and to prevent new infections in Maryland.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ART/Antiretroviral therapy-----	A combination of HIV medications taken daily to treat HIV infection and reduce the effect of the virus on the body.
Copies/ml-----	The human immunodeficiency virus is measured by counting the amount of virus in a milliliter of blood.
Durably undetectable-----	An undetectable viral load is maintained for at least 6 months after a person's first undetectable test result.
Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)-----	A medication that, when taken daily, helps prevent an HIV-negative person from getting HIV through sex or needle-sharing with a person who is living with HIV.
Undetectable/Viral suppression-----	When the HIV virus is suppressed to levels that are not detectable by laboratory testing; a result of taking antiretroviral therapy daily as prescribed.
Untransmittable-----	Not able to transmit HIV; cannot spread HIV or pass on HIV.
Serodiscordant/serodifferent-----	Partners who do not have the same HIV status.

U=U TOOLS: TALKING ABOUT U=U