

Treatment Adherence

Dos and Don'ts



What is treatment adherence?

Adherence is defined as “the extent to which a person’s behaviour – the taking of medication and the following of a healthy lifestyle including a healthy diet and other activities – corresponds with the agreed recommendations of the health care provider.” (WHO, 2003)

In the context of antiretroviral treatment (ART), adherence means strictly following your treatment schedule as advised by your ART doctor. This includes taking the correct dose of your ART at the scheduled time, following dietary instructions, and regularly following up at the ART centre for routine health check-ups.



Why it matters

- HIV multiplies rapidly in the absence of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs.
- Whenever there is non-adherence, viral load increases rapidly, within three to seven days and sometimes even faster.
- Non-adherence leads to greater resistance to ART.
- Once resistance develops, ART is no longer effective and viral replication increases, which weakens the immune system making you prone to opportunistic infections.

Dos

- Take your ART as prescribed every day without fail.
- Take your medicines at the same time every day, for example at 8 o'clock in the morning and at 8 o'clock in the evening.
- Schedule doses before routine daily activities. For example take medicines while watching favourite daily TV shows or at breakfast, dinner, or bedtime.
- Always carry a supply of your medicines with you to ensure intake if you have an unexpected change in plans.
- Keep a small pill box in your pocket, backpack or purse when going out.
- Plan early for changes in your routine such as vacations, festivals or family celebrations.
- Use reminders like alarms, daily calendar, punch card, watch or cell phone to ensure timely intake of medicines.
- Count your remaining pills every week to make sure you are taking them regularly.
- Consult your doctor immediately if you have any side effects or illnesses.
- Discuss any concerns or doubts about adherence and treatment with your doctor/counsellor.
- Visit your ART Centre as per your scheduled date every month to meet the doctor, for counselling and to collect medicines.
- Remember to share all relevant information about your health condition and medication with your doctor.
- Get encouragement and motivation from your family, friends, neighbours and co-workers who know your status to support your regular intake of ART.
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- Register with your nearest Vihaan Care & Support Centre or Helpdesk to get support you need.

Don'ts

- Don't share your medicines with your spouse, partners or children.
- Don't take more than your prescribed dose ART. If you miss a dose, get back on your regular schedule immediately. Be honest with your doctor or counsellor if you miss a dose and then follow their advice.
- Avoid smoking, liquor, tobacco, and addictive drugs as they are known to weaken the immune system and make ART less effective.
- Avoid self-medication. Use only prescribed medicines by your doctor.



For better treatment outcomes

- Take pills as prescribed by your doctor.
- Attend follow-up appointments.
- Collect your medicines from the ART Centre regularly.
- Maintain healthy diet and lifestyle.

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