

## Children and adolescents - HIV medicines, part 9

A pregnant mother spreading HIV to her baby is the most common way that children become infected with HIV. Most adolescents who get HIV are infected through sex.



HIV treatment, called antiretroviral therapy or ART, is a combination of HIV medicines, called an HIV regimen. ART is recommended for everyone with HIV, including children and adolescents.

When to start ART and what HIV medicines to take depends on many things. Growth and development are two issues that affect HIV treatment in children and adolescents.

Because children and adolescents with HIV are still growing, the doses of HIV medicines are not always based on age. Instead, weight or stage of development is used to decide the best dose of an HIV medicine.

The choice of an HIV medicine to use can depend on a child's age. For example, some HIV medicines come in a liquid form, which is easier for infants and young children to take.

Medication adherence means taking HIV medicines every day and exactly as prescribed. Effective HIV treatment depends on good medication adherence. Several things can make adherence hard for children and adolescents with HIV. For example, a child may refuse to take an HIV medicine because it doesn't taste good.

Embarrassment with HIV can make adherence especially hard for HIV-infected adolescents. They may skip medicine doses to avoid having others know that they are HIV-positive.



Other things can also affect medication adherence:

- A complicated HIV regimen that includes many pills
- A busy schedule that makes it hard to take HIV medicines on time every day
- Mental illness or alcohol or drug abuse
- Lack of health insurance to cover the cost of HIV medicines

Be sure to get answers to any questions you have about HIV/AIDS. Your public health department, health care provider, and public library can help.