

# About the HIV Treatment Guidelines

## What are the Federal HIV treatment guidelines?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issues guidelines to help doctors treat people with HIV in the United States. Separate guidelines have been developed for:

- treatment of adults and adolescents
- treatment of children
- treatment of pregnant women and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV
- prevention of **opportunistic infections**

The guidelines are written in sophisticated medical language and may be challenging for the general public to read and understand. "*HIV and Its Treatment: What You Should Know*" is a series of easy-to-read fact sheets based on the Federal guidelines. These fact sheets can help you understand the recommendations found in the guidelines.

## Who writes the guidelines?

The guidelines are written, reviewed, and updated by panels of HIV experts from across the country. Panel members include physicians, pharmacists, researchers, and HIV treatment advocates.

## What information is used in developing the guidelines?

The panels of HIV experts study drug information submitted to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as well as research findings presented at conferences and published in professional journals. Often new information comes from **clinical trials** testing the safety and effectiveness of different treatments. Members of the guidelines panels also use their own clinical experience to make the recommendations found in the treatment guidelines.

## What information will I find in the guidelines?

Topics covered in the guidelines include:

- the goals of anti-HIV therapy
- when to start treatment
- monitoring of patient health

### *Terms Used in This Fact Sheet:*

**Clinical trial:** A scientifically designed study testing the safety and effectiveness of a medication or other treatment in human volunteers.

**Opportunistic infections:** Infections that usually don't cause disease in people with normal immune systems, but can affect people with damaged immune systems, including people with HIV.

- medication side effects and their management
- anti-HIV medications for use during pregnancy
- diagnosis of HIV infection in infants

Much of the information is presented in tables and charts for quick reference.

## Will the guidelines tell me what HIV medications I should take?

The guidelines list "preferred" and "alternative" HIV treatment regimens. You and your doctor will decide which medications are right for you; each HIV treatment regimen is tailored to the individual patient (see [Fact Sheet #4: Recommended HIV Treatment Regimens](#)).

## When are the guidelines updated and how can I access them?

Updates to the HIV treatment guidelines can occur at any time. Since the guidelines were first introduced in 1998, the period between updates has ranged from several weeks to several months or more. You can join the *AIDSinfo* E-News listserv to receive an e-mail notification when updated guidelines are released (<http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/other/subscribe.asp>).

Current and past versions of the guidelines are available online at <http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/guidelines/>. The "*HIV and Its Treatment: What You Should Know*" fact sheet series is available online at [http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/ed\\_resources/](http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/ed_resources/). Paper copies of the guidelines and fact sheets can be ordered online at <http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/publications/> or by calling 1-800-448-0440.

## For more information:

Contact your doctor or an *AIDSinfo* Health Information Specialist at 1-800-448-0440 or <http://aidsinfo.nih.gov>.