

## Patient information

# Switching Antiretroviral Medication

### Sexual Health Department

#### Why am I being asked to switch my antiretroviral medication?

Your clinical team may suggest changing your antiretroviral therapy (ART) for a number of reasons:

- **To make it more simple:** Reducing how many tablets you need to take or changing to a tablet that can be taken with or without food.
- **Side effects:** Some ART may have possible effects on your bone, kidneys and heart health.
- **Resistance:** If the virus has become less sensitive to your current tablets we may need to switch.
- **HIV treatment:** If your viral load is not 'undetectable,' changing your ART can help lower the level of virus in your body.
- **Interactions:** Some ART don't get along well with other medicines known as 'drug - drug interactions' (DDIs). We try to switch away from ART that interact with other medication you may be taking.
- **Cost:** Switching to a more cost-effective medication helps save NHS resources — but this will never compromise your care. Any new medication will be just as safe and effective as your current one.

#### Is the switch safe?

Yes. Before we offer you any ART switch, your clinical team will discuss the best and most appropriate treatment option for you. This will ensure that any switch is safe and effective. We will:

- Review your treatment history and laboratory results.
- Check for any drug resistance.
- Consider your lifestyle, medical conditions, and preferences.
- Discuss possible side effects or interactions with other medicines.

The decision to switch is made together with you. Our goal is to maintain excellent control of your HIV, protect your health, and support your quality of life.

## What happens if I agree to switch ART?

You will be asked to return to clinic for routine tests after four-six weeks to make sure the new medication is working well for you.

## What should I be aware of?

It is important to take the new tablets as prescribed because missing doses can affect how well it works. Some people may experience temporary side effects while adjusting to their new ART which usually settle with time, please speak to your clinical team if you have any concerns.

If you are prescribed another medication in the future or are taking any other drugs or supplements, please always check with your prescriber for DDIs. You can also check any medicines are safe to take with your ART yourself by using the HIV interaction checker website or app (see below).



<https://www.hiv-druginteractions.org/checker>

## What happens if I don't like the new ART?

If you don't like the new ART you have been switched to please speak to your clinical team before your next appointment so we can be ready to review your options when you attend clinic. We may be able to offer you an alternative or possibly switch back to your previous regimen if appropriate. Do not stop taking your ART unless advised by a doctor.

## Is this just to save the NHS money?

To help the NHS use its resources wisely and continue providing excellent care for everyone, your HIV team may suggest changing your current HIV medication to a similar one that works just as well but costs less. This change follows national NHS guidance and **is only recommended if it's safe and effective for you**. Your health always comes first, and your clinic will explain everything, answer any questions, and make sure the new treatment continues to work well for you.

## Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## Further information

**ID secretaries: Extension 3835**

**Email: [idsecretaries@liverpoolft.nhs.uk](mailto:idsecretaries@liverpoolft.nhs.uk)**

**BBV admin team: 3474**

**Email: [bbvadmin@liverpoolft.nhs.uk](mailto:bbvadmin@liverpoolft.nhs.uk)**

**Axess website: <https://www.axess.clinic/>**

**George House Trust: <https://ght.org.uk/>**

**Sahir House: <https://www.sahir.org.uk/>**

**iBASE: <https://i-base.info/>**

**Text phone number 1800101517063835; 180010157063774**

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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