HIV Treatment: Take It Easy

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HIV treatment once meant taking a fistful of pills each day. If you missed doses, HIV could multiply and develop mutations that made certain drugs useless.

Thanks to research, the pill count has grown smaller, and by 2006, what was once a dream may be reality—a one-pill, once-a-day regimen. First in development: Emtriva, Viread and Sustiva (HIV meds are usually taken in combinations of at least two of four classes). “This is a great combo for people starting treatment,” says Lloyd Bailey, MD, at St. Vincent’s Hospital Midtown in New York City. Despite Sustiva’s rep for mental-health side effects, he says, “In all but a small percentage of patients, these symptoms resolve in a few weeks.” And with health coverage, there’ll be one drug copayment instead of three. Now if only we had a cure—and needed no pills at all.

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