

# Get Ready, Steady, Go!

December 14, 2010

---

While docs can recommend when HIV treatment should start, only you can decide when you're ready to begin. Self-advocacy and communication with your health care provider can help overcome your questions or concerns.

## **Learn the basics**

Knowing the benefits and risks of HIV treatment may help calm your fears. Learn about your options, including when to start and what drugs to start with. You can find out more about HIV drugs at [aidsmeds.com](http://aidsmeds.com). Also check out their easy-to-read treatment lessons on a variety of topics for people living with the virus.

## **Make a plan**

Before you start HIV treatment, be sure you understand: How many pills of each medication should you take at a time? How many times a day should you take each medication, and when do you take them? What should you do if you forget a dose? What are the possible side effects and drug interactions?

## **Talk to your doc**

Are you worried about side effects? Confused by your pharmacy's instructions? Don't hesitate to call your doctor for answers and advice.

## **Brown-bag each checkout**

Dump all your meds—including OTC drugs and supplements—into a paper bag and bring it with you to each clinic visit. Your provider can sort through it for meds that don't mix.

## **Follow Up**

Once you start treatment, you and your doctor should check your viral load approximately every three months to make sure your regimen is working against HIV.

[Click here](#) to read the digital edition of this Real Health Focus

---