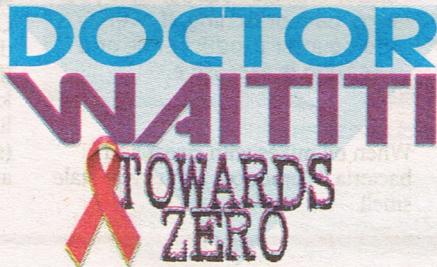


How are injectable ARVs used?

Q Dear Doctor,
I am in a discordant
relationship; my
partner is positive while
I am negative. He is on
ARVs and we have been
talking about long acting
injectable ARVs. Are
they for treatment or
prevention?

Gloria



A Dear Gloria,
ARVs like the
injectable long acting
lenacapivir and others can be
used to prevent HIV infection
when given as pre-exposure
prophylaxis (PrEP) to people
who are HIV negative but
in discordant relationships
like you are and others like
sex workers who are at high
risk of being exposed to the
infection. ARVs can also
be given as post-exposure
prophylaxis (PEP) after
someone has been exposed
for example in cases of rape
or needle pricks.

The same medicine is what is
used as treatment when given
to people already infected with
the virus. It is important that
the medicine, whether used
for prevention or treatment,
is used after being prescribed
by a qualified health service
provider and taken following
instructions given to avoid

abuse. In your case, if your
partner is on ARVs and his
viral load is undetectable, then
you should be safe; because
an undetectable viral load is
undetectable.

However, we encourage
people to use more than
one prevention method if
possible; which is known as
“combination prevention” in
order to exploit the synergy or
interaction of the two or more
methods for better outcomes.
So, you can use condoms,
which also prevent unwanted
pregnancy and other sexually
transmitted infections such as
hepatitis B and syphilis, even
when your partner is on ARVs
and has an undetectable viral
load.

Indeed, you can also use
PrEP, if deemed necessary by
your health service provider;
for example, when you want
to get pregnant and have to
have to practice unprotected

sex even when your partner
is on ARVs but his viral load
is undetectable or you wish to
use more than one prevention
method as explained above.
Therefore, in your case it
is important that you keep
discussing both treatment
and prevention options with
your health service provider.
That is what is known as
“self-management”, which is
very important in chronic care
since antiretroviral therapy
(ART) is treatment for life.
We encourage all people to have
“health literacy”, which
enables individuals to find
and utilize information about
health, so that they can make
informed decisions about their
health and that of others.

Those on treatment like
people with HIV need
“treatment literacy”, which
means understanding a
disease and its treatment,
such as the science behind it,
including treatment regimens
and common side effects.