

# U=U

UNDETECTABLE =  
UNTRANSMITTABLE

## PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

A rationale to use in advocacy for people living with HIV

*Advocates should be equipped to use the so-called public health argument from U=U in advocacy to increase access and remove barriers to quality health care; ensuring people with HIV have the treatment and services they need to achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load not only saves lives, but also is an effective way to prevent new transmissions.*

THE LANCET

CALL TO ACTION: HOW CAN THE US ENDING THE HIV EPIDEMIC INITIATIVE SUCCEED?

### THE U=U PUBLIC HEALTH RATIONALE

The public health rationale is a strategy to use when advocating to increase access and remove barriers to treatment, care, and services for people living with HIV worldwide.

The public health rationale is simple. When people living with HIV have the treatment, care, and services they need to stay undetectable, they stay healthy and cannot transmit HIV through sex. Undetectable = Untransmittable, or U=U. This is often referred to as treatment as prevention.

**So, treatment, care, and services are good for the personal health of people living with HIV, and good for the public health of the community.**

### WHY THE PUBLIC HEALTH RATIONALE IS IMPORTANT

The public health rationale directly addresses the public health interests of policymakers.

Although we hope that policymakers will make decisions based on what protects the well-being of people with HIV, we recognize that some policymakers aren't as interested in this goal, especially within oppressive healthcare systems and governments.

We must explain to policymakers how treatment, care, and services to keep people with HIV healthy will also address public health goals of preventing HIV and ending the HIV epidemic.



prevention  
access  
campaign

# HOW TO USE THE PUBLIC HEALTH RATIONALE

Advocates can almost always point to a public health benefit of advocacy to improve the well-being of people living with HIV. Policies improving the safety and health of people with HIV will help support people living with HIV to access quality care and effective treatment, leading to greater viral suppression and preventing new transmissions.

## EXPLAIN U=U

U=U will be new to most policymakers. Even if they've heard of it, they might not fully believe it or feel comfortable talking about it. It's important they know U=U is verified by science and the world's leading public health, medical, and research institutions.

"HIV treatment can suppress the amount of HIV in the body to undetectable levels. When HIV is undetectable, it's not transmittable through sex. In other words, Undetectable = Untransmittable or U=U."

## CONNECT U=U TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Explain that the advocacy request will not only provide personal health benefits for people living with HIV, but it also has the public health benefits of preventing new transmissions.

"When people living with HIV have the treatment and services to stay healthy and get and stay undetectable, they can't pass on HIV. So advocacy request benefits both people living with HIV and the broader community. It's a double win."

## EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THE PUBLIC HEALTH RATIONALE

A growing body of scientific evidence supports the public health rationale, as do modeling studies predicting the impact of widespread antiretroviral coverage on population health.

- [HIV incidence fell by three-quarters in Australian gay men, with strong association with treatment as prevention](#)
- [African studies show that lowering viral load in the community reduces HIV incidence, but is not enough to eliminate HIV](#)
- [US HIV infections could drop by 94% before 2030, if treatment is prioritized](#)
- [U=U encourages men in South Africa to test for HIV](#)
- [Can U=U be used to reshape HIV programs globally?](#)
- [Positive Perspectives Wave 2: Informing about U=U leads to better positive health outcomes](#)

Connect to the U=U movement on social media using **#UEQUALSU**

Twitter & Instagram:  
**@PREVENTIONAC**

Facebook group:  
**UEQUALSU**

Website:  
**WWW.PREVENTIONACCESS.ORG**

Contact:  
**CAMERON@PREVENTIONACCESS.ORG**

*The concept of U=U can also strengthen advocacy efforts for universal access to effective treatment and care*

PEPFAR 2021 Country and Regional Operational Plan Guidance for all PEPFAR countries

*Not only does HIV treatment have life-changing individual benefits by enabling people living with HIV to stay healthy, maintain their quality of life and have a lifespan similar to people not living with HIV, it is now recognized to have important population health benefits by interrupting transmission of HIV.*

World Health Organization (WHO)

