

Undetectable = Untransmittable: You can say zero risk

FACT: A person living with HIV who is on treatment and has an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV through sex. There is zero chance of transmission. In other words, Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U).

Why is it important to communicate U=U clearly?

Accurate knowledge about U=U reduces HIV stigma and frees people living with HIV (PLHIV) from the fear of sexual transmission. When speaking with PLHIV, their sexual partners, and the wider community, it is crucial to describe U=U in a way that inspires confidence and avoids promoting unnecessary doubts or fear.

We recommend using definitive and easy-to-understand phrases such as “can’t pass it on,” “cannot transmit,” and “no risk.” You can even say “zero risk”.

It is essential to avoid phrases that convey even slight risk or that are ambiguously defined like “nearly impossible,” “extremely low,” “essentially no,” and “virtually impossible.” Any perceived window of risk, no matter how slight, may be considered “still a risk” perpetuating unnecessary fear and stigma. Language that conveys that there is still a risk could also be used by those who wish to stigmatize and harm PLWH. If you see or hear such phrases being used, please speak out.

Who are some of the people and organizations communicating there is zero risk or that U=U is 100% effective?

Many leading scientists and organizations are saying “zero.”

- Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, Director of NIAID, NIH: "From a practical standpoint, the risk is **zero**."¹
- Dr. Alison Rodger (lead author of PARTNER 1 & 2) at AIDS 2018: "If you're on suppressive ART, you are sexually noninfectious. The risk is **zero**,"² and again "It's very, very clear the risk is **zero**."³
- Dr. Carl D. Dieffenbach, Director of NIAID Division of AIDS, NIH : "For somebody who is in a discordant couple, if the person [with HIV] is virologically suppressed, 'durably' --means there is no virus in your system, hasn't been for several months -- your chance of acquiring HIV from that person is **ZERO**; let's be clear about that: **ZERO**."⁴

Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

- Viral Suppression is estimated to be **100% effective** for preventing HIV sexual transmission.⁵

The British HIV Association (BHIVA) is encouraging members to say zero:

- “We recommend consistent and unambiguous terminology when discussing U=U such as “**no risk**” or “**zero risk**” of sexual transmission of HIV, avoiding terms like “negligible risk” and “minimal risk.”⁶

UNAIDS

- “A person with an undetectable viral load has **no chance** of passing on HIV.”⁷

A full **U=U communications guide** and many additional resources are available at www.uequalsu.org

Use **#UequalsU** in social media for greater visibility and connection to the U=U movement.

Contact: Cameron Kinker cameron@preventionaccess.org for resources and support.

¹ <https://imstilljosh.com/fauci-the-risk-is-zero/>

² https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/899892?src=wnl_edit_tpal&uac=248764HY&impID=1696856&faf=1

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OrwMm18Ry4&t=4s&list=PLMuV5dq7YMFuaMfvhexWqHiFKJ9iiMu_n&index=12

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGSTO2CSFrU&feature=youtu.be>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/estimates/preventionstrategies.html>

⁶ <https://www.bhiva.org/BHIVA-encourages-universal-promotion-of-U-U>

⁷ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/undetectable-untransmittable_en.pdf