

Preparing a Person with HIV for Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)

The flow chart below aims to assist clinicians in assessing their patients' readiness to commence ART.

Attitudes/Beliefs

- What are your thoughts on starting antiretroviral treatment (ART)?
- Is there anything in particular that concerns you about starting ART?
- How confident are you that you will be able to take the medication as per the instructions?
- What situations do you think may affect being able to take your medications?

Some examples may include:

- On weekends, holidays or 'partying'
- When you're not feeling well
- When no one else reminds you
- Having to take medication in public
- If it means changing your eating habits
- When you're not having any symptoms of illness

Barriers Identified

Knowledge

What do you understand about:

- The purpose and goals of ART?
- What is required once you start?
(EXAMPLE ANSWER regular monitoring, taking the medication as prescribed and it being a lifelong commitment)
- The importance of taking your medication the way you've been advised and not missing any doses?
(EXAMPLE ANSWER Suppressing viral load, preventing transmission, preventing resistance, increasing CD4 cell count)
- The side effects of taking ART? Do you have any concerns about these?
- What happens when you miss a dose/s? Should you or how should you 'catch up'?
(EXAMPLE ANSWER Suboptimal adherence can result in treatment failure and drug resistance)
- What happens if you choose not to go on medication?
(EXAMPLE ANSWER Risk transmission to others and loss of immune function)

Barriers Identified

Environment

What environmental factors could impact on your adherence?

- Housing stability
- Ability to pay for prescription
- Eating/sleeping
- Work patterns
- Weekend working/holiday patterns
- Ability to cope with change to routine
- Other current medication
- Incarceration
- Mental Health
- Shared accommodation
- Disclosure
- Cognitive impairment
- Low literacy
- English as a second language
- Alcohol and other drug issues
- Travelling with work
- Other medical conditions

Barriers Identified

Refer to the **Supporting Adherence Tool** if client is ready to commence treatment

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR THOSE NOT READY TO COMMENCE

- Provide education about HIV and ART:** Use simplified visual information to explain key concepts
- Address any fears of side effects:** Explain and contextualise consumer medicines information
- Strengthen their medication taking skills:** Practice with lollies, dosette boxes, setting phone reminders, cue dose training (associating medication taking with another habit i.e. brushing teeth), strategic positioning (put meds somewhere where they will be seen) and emergency dose(s) (in a bag, pocket or friend's house).
- Refer to counselling/drug and alcohol services:** to assist in managing possible co-existing morbidities i.e. depression, anxiety and substance abuse.
- Financial/housing concerns:** Link patient with the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation Ph. (02) 9283 8666