# HAART Start

February 1, 2002 By John Hatchett

All those mixed messages about when to begin HAART *may* be unmixing a bit due to new research. An important British study found that you are equally likely to achieve an undetectable viral load whether you start HAART with high or low viral load and CD4 counts. So why not wait -- and delay those nasty side effects for as long as possible? But don’t wait too long. Scientists from the University of British Columbia and Johns Hopkins have confirmed that patients who started therapy after their CD4s dropped below 200 saw their health decline faster. Bottom line: Once you begin treatment -- early or not -- you should be able to KO your viral load, at least for a while. But if your CD4s are already down for the count, your immune system may be too battered to get back and fight, even with HAART’s added punch.

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