



# How Do You Really Feel About Your HIV Meds?

Here are questions to ask yourself in advance.

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Switching HIV medications requires a lot of really honest conversations with your care provider. But, it also involves a lot of soul searching with yourself. And that's especially true for switching to a long-acting injectable HIV medication, as it's a whole new modality of taking your meds. Depending on your relationship with your doctor, you may not have robust conversations about your HIV medication, but consider this your sign to have that in-depth conversation as soon as possible, whether you're considering switching or not.

"I ask my patients how they're doing on their medication, if they have any issues with them," Kris Bungay, MD, a physician at NYU Langone Health, told POZ. "If they bring up something that they're having issues with, then I say, 'Hey, listen, there's another option.'"

In advance of that conversation with your doctor, here are some questions you can ask yourself to know how you really feel about your HIV treatment.

## 1. Am I taking my medication regularly?

Given how important adherence is when taking your HIV medication, some people might feel shame or guilt about not being able to keep up with their HIV meds. The reality is that many people who take pills have trouble with adherence. "I have some patients, especially younger patients, who may not take any other medications daily, who may not be good at taking pills," Bungay said. "So I assess how good they are with taking medications and if they would benefit from long-acting treatment."

If this is something you struggle with regularly, or you find it is becoming an increasing problem for you, the best remedy is to be honest with yourself and your care provider. Together, you can decide whether you can correct the course with your current regimen or if long-acting injectables are a good idea for you.

## 2. Does my current pill regimen fit in with my schedule?

People's lives change, as do their daily routines. New jobs, children, pets: sometimes, there seems to be stuff just throwing a wrench in your plans or trying to divert your attention. As schedules change, sometimes meds can feel inflexible. If a life change has gotten in between you and a normal pill timetable, make sure to talk to your doctor.

"My focus has shifted to making my appointments," said Patrick Ingram, who shared his story of switching to long-acting injectables with POZ. "I can go on with the other things that I have going on in my life."

### 3. Are my pills becoming a burden?

"Sometimes people may worry and say, 'I don't want them to have to take these pills,' or 'I'm getting tired of taking these pills,'" said Bungay. "Those are things I assess every time a patient comes in."

For some people, taking a pill is just as much a psychological issue as it is a question of logistics. And if you've been taking HIV medication for some time, chances are that popping a pill every day is becoming harder. And it's not just you: research has shown that adherence to daily medication [drops over time](#) in most people. If the idea of taking your pill every day used to be simple, but is now more psychologically complex, this could be the time to talk about making the switch with your care provider.

### 4. How do I feel about coming into the doctor's office more frequently?

On the other end of the spectrum, while taking a daily pill might seem a lot, so is a bimonthly trip to an office. For some people, a trip to the office is easy, or preferable, when compared to taking a daily pill. But there are many people for whom the trip doesn't make sense. "I have a lot of patients who are older who take other medications," Bungay said. "For some people, you know, they take multiple pills already and taking one less pill just to come in more frequently is not worth it for them."