Treatment: Long-Acting Drugs

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A recent Phase IIb study tested the long-acting injectable antiretrovirals (ARVs) cabotegravir and Edurant (rilpivirine) given every four or eight weeks. The study enrolled 309 first-timers to HIV treatment and initially gave them standard oral ARVs. After 20 weeks, those with an undetectable viral load were randomized to stay on the same oral drugs or switch to one of the two long-acting-injection dosing schedules. Of the 230 people who received the injections, a respective 94 percent and 87 percent of those in the eight- and four-week dosing groups had a fully suppressed virus after 96 weeks, as did 84 percent of those on the oral regimen. Participants commonly experienced reactions at the site of the injections (the buttocks) that were generally mild or moderate. A Phase III trial of four-week dosing is under way, and another trial of eight-week dosing is in the works.

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