See You in Six Months?

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If you have an undetectable viral load, it's possible that you might need to see the doctor only twice a year—saving money, time and hassle. A recent study analyzed a group of 2,171 HIV-positive people with undetectable viral loads over the course of a year as the participants went in for checkups every three, four or six months. About three quarters of each group maintained full control of the virus.

"We certainly don't want our study to be making a blanket statement that every patient who has an undetectable viral load can certainly be seen every six months," says lead researcher April Buscher, MD, an attending physician at Durham VA Medical Center in North Carolina, who conducted the research while she was a resident fellow at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and announced her findings at the IDWeek 2012 meting in San Diego. "We're just trying to start the conversations about getting clinicians to think of some patients who may not have to be seen every three months, or even every four months, that there very well may be patients who are appropriate to be seen every six months."

One thing that's clearly important: keeping appointments. The study found that those who canceled were more likely to develop a detectable viral load

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