

Long-Acting HIV Antiretroviral Therapy (ART): Cabotegravir/Rilpivirine (CAB/RPV)



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Clients

What is long-acting ART?

Long-acting ART is an injectable HIV treatment option for people with HIV who are virally suppressed with less than 50 copies per milliliter (mL) of virus in their bodies. Long-acting ART also helps keep your HIV virus levels undetectable, just like oral HIV medicines. Long-acting ART can replace daily oral HIV medicines with injections given once monthly or every two months.

What medicines are in long-acting ART?

The long-acting ART medicines currently available use two injectable medicines: cabotegravir and rilpivirine (brand name: Cabenuva), sometimes referred to as CAB/RPV. “Long-acting” means CAB/RPV medicines are slowly released over time to maintain the same level of medicine in the body between injection appointments. These two medicines may be different from your current daily oral HIV medicines.

Where are the injections given?

Long-acting ART is given by a health care professional as two separate injections. They are given either into the side muscle of each buttock or into the same buttock at least 2 centimeters apart.

Is this medicine different from long-acting HIV PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis)?

Yes. Long-acting PrEP contains cabotegravir (CAB) only (brand name: Apretude) and is used to prevent people from getting HIV. Long-acting ART contains two medicines, CAB and RPV, and is used to treat HIV infection.

Am I eligible for long-acting ART?

Eligibility may depend on different factors. If you are currently taking oral HIV medicines and have less than 50 copies per mL of virus in your body, long-acting ART may be an option for you. Medicines for certain health conditions may interact with long-acting ART. Talk to your HIV care provider and pharmacist about all the prescribed and over-the-counter medicines you take, including any herbal supplements. Together, you can decide whether long-acting ART is right for you.

Can I take long-acting ART if I am pregnant or want to get pregnant? What about if I am breastfeeding or chestfeeding?

Talk to your HIV care provider first if you are pregnant or plan to get pregnant. It is unknown how long-acting ART works during pregnancy. Also, long-acting ART may stay in your body for 12 months or longer after your last injections. Long-acting ART is not recommended if you are breastfeeding or chestfeeding because it is unknown if long-acting ART medicines can pass to your baby through milk. If you are breastfeeding or chestfeeding and are interested in long-acting ART, talk to your HIV care provider about the options available to feed your baby.

What are the common side effects of long-acting ART?

The most common side effects are pain, tenderness, redness, itching, bruising, and warmth at the injection site. These side effects tend to be mild and improve over time. Your HIV care provider may recommend tips to reduce pain, including pain medicines, ice or heat packs, or not sitting for an extended period of time. Some people have had fever, nausea, headache, tiredness, sleep problems, dizziness, or slight weight gain after starting long-acting ART injections.

Contact your HIV care provider immediately if you experience rash, changes in mood, or pain in the bones, joints, or muscles.

How often will I need to go to the clinic if I use long-acting ART? How long is the injection appointment?

Depending on your insurance and treatment plan, you will need to go to your HIV care provider's clinic or another location either once monthly or every two months for injection appointments. You will set a date with your provider to receive each injection ("agreed date of injection"). The length of the injection appointment may vary. You should expect to spend at least 30 minutes at the clinic, including 10 minutes after your injections to monitor for immediate side effects.

Can I reschedule injection appointments?

If you need to reschedule, contact your HIV care team. You can get the injections from seven days before to seven days after your agreed date. If you cannot make it to your appointment within that time, let your HIV care provider know right away. You will need oral HIV medicines to cover you until your next injection appointment. Staying on HIV medicine is important to control the virus and lower the chance that the virus will mutate (change), which could make it difficult to treat in the future.

How will I pay for long-acting ART and associated medical visits?

Paying for long-acting ART will depend on your health insurance, specifically your medical and pharmacy benefits. If you do not have health insurance or are underinsured, New York State Medicaid, the New York State Uninsured Care Programs' AIDS Drug

Assistance Program, or ViiVConnect may be able to help cover the cost of medicines and medical visits.

- **Medicaid** pays for a wide range of comprehensive health services, depending on your age, financial circumstances, family situation, or living arrangements. For information on which health insurance options are available to you, including New York State Medicaid, visit nystateofhealth.ny.gov/individual. For information on applying for Medicaid, visit health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/how_do_i_apply.htm.
- The **Uninsured Care Programs** helps New Yorkers with HIV pay for medical costs, medicine, health insurance, or out-of-pocket costs (copays and deductibles). For more information, visit health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/general/resources/adap/index.htm.
- **ViiVConnect** provides resources for medicines distributed by ViiV Healthcare, including long-acting ART. It provides information on what your health insurance plan and covers your financial assistance options and may be able to help with the cost of your medicine. For more information, visit viivconnect.com/patient.

What if I want to stop long-acting ART and go back to my daily oral HIV medicines?

If you are no longer interested in long-acting ART, you can work with your HIV care provider to switch back to oral HIV medicines. To minimize the chance of side effects or interactions with other medicines, tell all your providers that you were on long-acting CAB/RPV and the date of your last injection.

I am ready to learn more about long-acting ART. What are my next steps?

Talk to your HIV care provider about whether long-acting ART is right for you. The most important question to ask yourself when considering switching to long-acting ART is “Can I commit to attending injection appointments and communicating with my HIV care provider on a regular basis?”

To find HIV care providers near you:

- Visit the American Academy of HIV Medicine at bit.ly/aahivm-directory.
- Visit nyc.gov/health/map and select “Sexual Health Services,” then “HIV Treatment.”