



What you should know about using street drugs while on HIV treatment, Methadone Replacement Therapy or both.

Code FY10-13

[Field Trial DRAFT]

Share this information with your drug using friends. Even if you do not know whether they have HIV, TB or STIS!

HOW DOES MY DRUG USE AFFECT HIV TREATMENTS?

- Using street drugs can cause your body additional stress which can make it harder for your body to fight HIV.
- Sharing needles and syringes or having sex without a condom increases your chance of getting other infections such as hepatitis and STIs into your body and that can be harmful to your health and make it more complicated to treat HIV.
- If you are taking antiretroviral therapy (ART) or OI medications (e.g for TB, candida, respiratory and stomach infection or STIs) it can be harmful to use street drugs because the medications can mix together in a harmful way (**drug interactions**)
- People with HIV, who use street drugs are at risk of these drugs mixing (interacting) with their ARVs and OI medications and causing serious health problems and complications. These are called drug interactions.
- Mixing drugs and ARVs/OI drugs can cause a number of different complications including:
 - 1) increasing side effects from ARVs;
 - 2) decrease the amount of ARVs in your body so that they no longer work to fight the HIV virus;

- 3) increasing the risk of harm from drugs including being overly sleepy, coma and even death and;
- 4) causing excess strain on important organs like the liver and heart – this can make you very sick working because there's not enough of them in your body.
- Drug interactions can cause a serious, increase in the level of drugs.

What happens in side you when you mix other drugs with your treatments



Most ARVs are processed by the liver. Many street drugs can damage the liver.

Anything, which damages the liver, can be a serious problem for people with HIV.

Heroin

When some ARVs and OI drugs mix with heroin, the levels of heroin in the body can decrease so that you don't experience the same high from heroin – it can even cause withdrawal.

You should not increase the amount of heroin that you take as this can result in a risk of overdose.

Methadone (MMT)

Methadone is a strong drug and can interact with medicines from your doctor as well as over the counter drugs, street drugs and alcohol. It is very important that you tell your methadone doctor if you take other medications and that you tell your other doctors (e.g the TB clinic or the emergency department) that you are on methadone.

Drug interactions with methadone can either speed up or slow down the way your body manages methadone - can make your usual methadone dose either too much (sleepy) or too little (withdrawal). If any of your doctors need to prescribe medications that interact with methadone – your methadone dose may require adjustment.

If you are on any of these medications or a doctor wants to prescribe any of these medications for you, your methadone dose will need to be reviewed.

Medicines that reduce the effect of methadone and may cause withdrawal:

- anti-epileptic drugs - carbamazepine (Tegretol), phenytoin (Dilantin) and occasionally sodium valproate (Epilim)
- anti-retroviral drugs – nevirapine and efavirenz
- anti-TB drugs – rifampicin
- cocaine

Medicines that increase the effect of methadone:

- anti-depressant drugs – amitriptyline and fluvoxamine
- drugs to treat stomach acidity – cimetidine
- anti-fungal drug – ketoconazole

Medicines that block the effect of methadone in the brain and can cause withdrawal

- naltrexone
- buprenorphine

Drugs that interact with methadone to cause excessive sedation and may make you stop breathing and die (especially when first starting methadone):

- alcohol
- benzodiazepines (diazepam, alprazolam, lorazepam)

E: Other drug interactions:

methadone can increase the dose of AZT in the blood and give you bad side effects from AZT

- **Sedatives** (drugs that make you relaxed and sleepy) like Valium (diazepam) can interact with some ARVs and OI drugs resulting in an increase in their sedative effect and possible overdose.

Anabolic Steroids (used for muscle body building) at the same as ARVs and OI drugs can cause serious liver problems. This is especially dangerous when you have HIV.

Ecstasy & Amphetamines

It is difficult to know what the effect of mixing these drugs with ARVs and OI drugs.

- Mixing Ecstasy and some ARVs/OI drugs levels may increase ecstasy dangerously high levels in the body. Some people on ARVs have DIED from taking ecstasy. .
- Mixing Amphetamines (drugs that speed you up) and some ARVs may also increase amphetamine levels to dangerously high levels and put a great strain on the body. Alcohol

Alcohol

- Chronic (long term) alcohol use can lower levels of many ARVs and damage your liver and other internal organs.