Definitions

Adherence

Adherence comes from the word "adhere." To adhere to something means to stick to or stay with something. Adherence is extremely important when taking your HIV medications.

AIDS

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

ART

Anti-retroviral therapy or ART are the medications that work to prevent HIV from copying itself in your body. ARVs or HAART are other names.

CD4

CD4 cells are immune cells that the HIV attacks. Sometimes they are also called T-cells or helper T-cells. The higher your CD4 count, the stronger your immune system is.

CD4 Count

This is a measure of CD4 cells in your body. Your CD4 count tells your doctor how strong your immune system is. A person with a CD4 count of less than 200 is said to have AIDS.

Cells

Cells are the building blocks of life. All living things consist of at least one cell. Cells contain genetic information and the machinery that carries out many of the processes of a living organism.

Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens, or psychedelics, are drugs that affect perception, sensation, thinking, self-awareness and emotions. LSD, acid, peyote and 'shrooms are hallucinogens.

Harm Reduction	Harm reduction is any behavior or strategy that helps to reduce risk or harm to yourself and others. For example, to reduce your risk of getting HIV, you can practice safer sex or safer drug use by using condoms or using clean needles.
HAART	HAART stands for highly active anti-retroviral therapy. Some people may refer to your ART regimen as HAART.
HIV	HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. HIV attacks CD4 cells and uses their machinery to make copies of itself. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.
Immune System	The immune system is the body's infection fighter. It helps the body fight all kinds of illnesses including colds, flu, pneumonia and viruses such as HIV. The immune system is made up of many different types of cells that interact with each other and work together to serve as our defense against bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites that cause infectious illnesses.
Opportunistic Infections	Opportunistic infections (OIs) are those infections that may harm the body when the immune system is weakened. When the immune system is strong and not weakened by HIV, it fights off OIs. Some examples of OIs include pneumocystitis pneumonia (PCP), thrush, mycobacterium avium complex (MAC), shingles and toxoplasmosis.
Sedatives	These are the drugs that slow down the brain and the central nervous system (CNS). They can cause calmness, relaxation, sleepiness, slowed breathing, slurred speech, staggering gait, poor judgment and slow, uncertain reflexes. Examples of sedatives are alcohol, Valium, pain killers (barbiturates) and heroin (opioids).

STDs	Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also known as venereal diseases or sexually transmitted infections. STDs are diseases or infections that humans can transmit by means of sexual contact, such as vaginal intercourse, oral sex and anal sex. Practicing safe sex or harm reduction techniques can decrease your chances of getting STDs.
Side Effects	Side effects are the unwanted effects that your medications can cause. Common side effects of ART are nausea, vomiting and fatigue, among many others.
Stimulants	Stimulants are drugs that temporarily increase alertness and wakefulness. Examples of common stimulants are amphetamines such as crystal meth, cocaine and crack.
Viral Load	Viral load is a test to measure the amount of HIV in your blood. Your doctor often uses this test to see how well your anti-retroviral medications are working.
Undetectable Viral Load	An undetectable viral load is when there is so little virus in your blood that a test can't measure it. The virus is still present in the body, but in very small amounts.
Virus	A virus is a small infectious particle that needs the help of a host organism to reproduce or make copies of itself. A virus consists of genetic material (DNA or RNA) enclosed by a shell.