

Sector Release

30 April 2020

Accessing HIV treatments during COVID-19

Australia still has ample supplies of all HIV medications

The pharmaceutical companies who provide antiretroviral medications in Australia would like to reassure people living with HIV (PLHIV) that there are still healthy supplies of HIV treatments in the country. What's more, they do not anticipate any disruption to supply in the near future.

PLHIV are encouraged to keep ordering their medications as usual and to keep taking them as prescribed. People with HIV should not skip doses or share medication with friends who are worried about their own supply.

Gilead is providing free postage of medications

In order to avoid going out, PLHIV can now have their HIV treatments posted to them at home by asking their doctor to forward scripts directly to the pharmacy (by email or fax).

Most pharmacies are dispensing the full script (4 or 6 months worth) but only providing 2 months supply at first, and then posting the next lot out at the appropriate time. A few pharmacies are only dispensing one month's supply at first, but also providing the rest by post.

PLHIV are encouraged to request this postal service if it isn't offered.

Any pharmacist can access free prepaid post bags by contacting Gilead Sciences in their Melbourne offices on (03) 9272 4400.

ViiV and Gilead expand Compassionate Access for people living with HIV stuck in Australia

There are many PLHIV who are residents in Australia but are not eligible for a Medicare card and so are unable to access subsidised HIV treatments through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Some of these PLHIV are on Temporary Visas and return to their home countries regularly to fill their HIV prescriptions. But this is impossible at the moment. Which is why Australian pharmaceutical companies have expanded their Compassionate Access Schemes to allow people who are stuck in the country to get access to HIV treatments.

PLHIV in this situation are encouraged to talk to any GP who specialises in HIV (an HIV s100 prescriber) or any doctor at a Sexual Health Clinic. The doctor will contact the relevant pharmaceutical company who supplies the particular treatment and, if approved, will provide them with two months supply free of charge.

National Association of People with HIV Australia

NAPWHA is Australia's peak non-government organisation representing community-based groups of people with HIV. Its membership of national networks and state-based organisations reflects the diverse make-up of the HIV-positive community and enables NAPWHA to confidently represent the positive voice in Australia.