

**MODULE 3**

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**STUDY GUIDE**

**HIV/AIDS: 101**

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# VIRAL LOAD TESTING

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Healthcare providers use viral load testing to determine when to start HIV medications and when to change medications.

Viral load is the quantity of HIV detected in a sample of blood. Studies have shown that knowing the viral load is important in the management of HIV infection, and it's a predictor of how far along into AIDS a person may be. This test can also give a picture of a person's immune system.

Viral load tests can tell a doctor whether or not a patient meets the definition of AIDS, which is having a loss of immune cells and/or having certain diseases.

Sometimes a person with HIV infection may have "undetectable" levels of HIV in a viral load test. This does not mean the person is no longer infected; it only means that the amount of HIV in the bloodstream is below what these tests can find.