



# Dolutegravir (DTG) for HIV Treatment

## Client Information on DTG

Due to its effectiveness, the HIV treatment drug Dolutegravir (DTG) is now recommended as one of the drugs for HIV treatment regimens among eligible clients

### What is Dolutegravir (DTG)?

- Dolutegravir (DTG) is an antiretroviral (ARV) drug used to treat HIV infection.
- DTG will be given as part of a fixed-dose combination commonly known as **TLD**:
  - Tenofovir (TDF) +
  - Lamivudine (3TC) +
  - Dolutegravir (DTG)

### What is currently known about DTG?

- ✓ DTG is a **safe and effective drug** for rapid viral suppression.
- ✓ DTG has **fewer side effects, drug interactions and is less likely to develop treatment resistance** which can stop the HIV medicines from working in the body to reduce viral load.

### How will introduction of DTG based regimens affect my HIV treatment?

- The MOHCC will introduce the DTG-containing regimen in a phased approach:
  - **Start:** with those who are **newly initiated on HIV treatment**
  - **Over time:** clients on ART with **confirmed viral suppression in the last 12 months i.e. viral load of <1,000 copies/ml, TND or undetectable** will be transitioned to a DTG-containing regimen
- **REMEMBER:** Change in HIV treatment **SHOULD ONLY** be made on the advice and guidance of a qualified health professional.

### What considerations are important for PLHIV before starting on a DTG-based ART regimen?

- Exposure to Dolutegravir (DTG) at the time a woman becomes pregnant (conception) may be associated with an increased risk of **neural tube defects** among infants. These are birth defects of the brain, spine, or spinal cord. They happen in the first month of pregnancy, often before a woman even knows that she is pregnant.
- DTG is not recommended for HIV-positive women who are intending to become pregnant, or pregnant women during their first trimester.
- HIV-positive adolescent girls and women capable of becoming pregnant (including those who are breastfeeding), who are **NOT planning to become pregnant** can receive the preferred regimen containing DTG. Before taking DTG adolescent girls and women of child bearing potential should:
  - ✓ Receive a **pregnancy test**
  - ✓ Be using a **reliable, effective contraceptive method**.



## Family Planning and DTG – what should all adolescent girls and women know?

- All HIV-positive adolescent girls and women capable of becoming pregnant should be given adequate information and access to **family planning methods** to enable them to make informed choices about their treatment options.
- **Long acting contraception methods** are the most effective way to prevent unintended pregnancies.
- HIV-positive women who start on DTG, but then plan to get pregnant, should **discuss with their health care provider** about provision of alternative antiretroviral treatment before you fall pregnant.

## HIV Treatment and Family Planning Options are YOUR Choice!

- Women living with HIV have strongly expressed the importance of ensuring a woman's right to make her **own informed choice** among ART regimen options.
- All PLHIV should **receive information** on all available forms of HIV treatment and family planning methods.
- **Once you have received information, you should be given the choice with regard to which HIV Treatment or family planning method you want to use.**



## What should all PLHIV know once taking a DTG-containing regimen?

- **Adhere to your treatment:** take your ARVs at the same time every day, as advised by your health care provider. Do not stop taking your ART even if you are feeling well.
- Talk to your health care worker about any upcoming life events (i.e., travel, seasonal work) that might interfere with taking your ARVs and **plan ahead to avoid any treatment interruptions.**
- Your **sexual partner and all children in your household should know their HIV status.**
- **Report side effects** to your health care worker.
- **Do not stop taking your ARV medicines** without talking to your health care worker.
- **Do not share** your medicines.
- **Store your ARV medicines at room temperature, in a secure, dry place.** Keep all medicines out of reach from children.
- **Pick-up your ARV refills before you run out** of medicine.
- Ensure **timely viral load monitoring** and attend all scheduled clinic appointments on time – set reminders and plan ahead.
- **Talk to your health care worker if you have any questions about your HIV treatment or need support –** you are not alone.

For further information on DTG and your family planning and HIV treatment options, talk to your health care worker.