



HIV/AIDS

Quick Reference Guide

2026

Table of Contents

1. CLINICAL SNAPSHOT	3
HCC/RAF V28 Mapping	4
2. RECOGNITION AND DIAGNOSIS	6
Medicare Part B Covered Screenings and Services for Suspected HIV	6
Subtle Early Signs in Older Adults	7
Geriatric Risk Factors	8
Diagnostic Thresholds for HIV/AIDS	9
Clues to Dig Deeper	10
Common Oversights	11
Key Differentials in Elderly	12
Comorbidity Screening	13
HIV Diagnosis, Staging and Classification	14
3. MEAT DOCUMENTATION ESSENTIALS	18
Clinical Documentation Elements	18
Reframing Common Documentation Shortcuts	19
4. TREATMENT AND REFERRAL QUICK GUIDE	20
Therapy Escalation Criteria	21
Antiretroviral Treatment Pathway (per DHHS 2024 and IAS-USA 2024 Guidelines).....	22
Non-Pharmacologic Care and Supportive Interventions	23
Medication Safety and Key Interactions	24
When to Refer	26
Follow-Up Timing	27
Comorbidity Management — Primary Care Role.....	28
Cost-Smart Options	29
Patient Education and Adherence - Geriatric 5Ms Framework	30
Quality Metrics Tie-In	32
5. CODING REMINDERS AND CASE EXAMPLES	34
Coding Specificity	34
Annual Clinical Review and Confirmation	35
Good Documentation is Comprehensive Coding	36
EHR Workflow Tips	37
Brief Case Examples	38
REFERENCES	39

1 CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

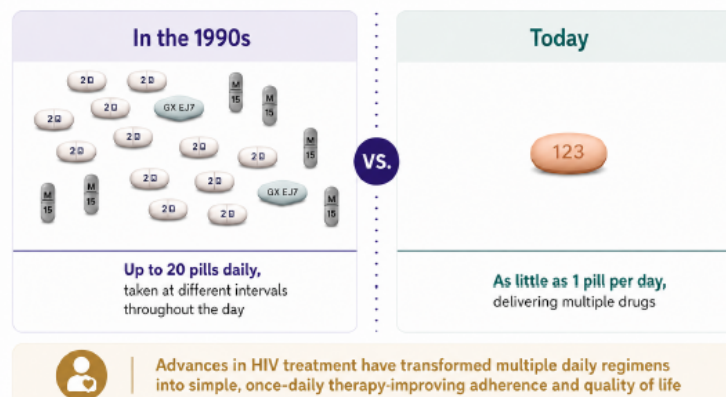
Definition: Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a retrovirus that targets CD4+ T-lymphocytes, progressively depleting cellular immunity when untreated.¹ Without antiretroviral therapy (ART), HIV progresses through **three stages**: (1) acute infection (flu-like illness 2–4 weeks post-exposure), (2) chronic infection (clinical latency, often asymptomatic for years), and (3) **AIDS**: CD4 count <200 cells/mm³, CD4 percentage <14%, or any AIDS-defining illness.^{1,2} With effective ART, HIV is now a **manageable chronic condition**; viral suppression (undetectable viral load) prevents disease progression and eliminates sexual transmission (**Undetectable = Untransmittable, U=U**).³

ICD-10 Codes:

B20 (HIV disease): Any patient with **current or prior HIV-related illness** or AIDS-defining condition, even if currently asymptomatic and virally suppressed = **PERMANENT** once assigned and must **NEVER** be reverted to **Z21**; **Z21** (asymptomatic HIV infection status): HIV-positive with **NO current or prior** HIV-related illness or AIDS-defining condition; chart review of prior encounters required before Z21 can be assigned.⁴ Both B20 and Z21 map to **HCC 1** (RAF 0.301); the distinction is a **compliance and accuracy issue**, not a RAF differential.⁴ AIDS-defining manifestations are coded **B20 FIRST**, then the manifestation: **B59** (PCP), **C46.0/C46.5** (Kaposi sarcoma), **B37.81** (esophageal candidiasis), **B45.1** (cryptococcal meningitis), **B58.2** (toxoplasma encephalitis), **A31.2** (disseminated MAC), **C83.7x** (Burkitt lymphoma), **C83.3x** (primary CNS lymphoma).^{4,5}

Prevalence and Burden: As of 2022, 13.2% of people with HIV (PWH) in the United States were **aged ≥65**, making this age group the **fastest-growing** segment of the HIV-positive population.⁶ Among adults ≥50, HIV prevalence **increased 40%** (289,900 to 407,100) and incidence **increased 15%** (2,700 to 3,100) from 2015–2019.⁷ A landmark Medicare study of 43,708 beneficiaries ≥65 with HIV found significantly higher odds of depression, CKD, COPD, osteoporosis, ASCVD, diabetes, chronic hepatitis, and cancer compared to age-matched beneficiaries without HIV.¹³ **Polypharmacy is the rule**: median **13 daily medications** in PWH aged ≥60, only 4 of which are antiretrovirals.⁸ In the 2025 **CHANGE-Rx cohort** (n=440, median age 69): 53.8% had polypharmacy, 49.3% had ≥1 potentially inappropriate medication per Beers criteria, 55.7% had high sedative burden, and 16.5% had high anticholinergic burden.⁹ **Five drugs** account for **84.8% of all PIMs** in elderly PWH: (1) lorazepam 38.2%, (2) ibuprofen 18.0%, (3) diazepam 10.2%, (4) metoclopramide 9.9%, (5) zolpidem 8.5%.⁸ The success of modern antiretroviral therapy in achieving durable viral suppression has transformed HIV from a fatal diagnosis into a manageable chronic condition: heart disease and cancer, **not** AIDS-defining illnesses, are now the leading causes of death in older PWH.¹⁰

Antiretroviral Therapy for HIV Infection



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