



## Partner Protection Counseling Guide: Safer Sex Script

Adapted from: Peluso, et al (2020)

### **Safer Sex Script:**

*“This trial includes a period of time where you will need to stop taking effective antiretroviral treatment (ART) in order to answer scientific questions. We expect that your HIV viral load will increase, or ‘rebound’ when you pause your HIV treatment. We expect that all trial participants may no longer be ‘undetectable’ in a few weeks after stopping their HIV treatment. We will be in frequent contact with you and we will evaluate you closely during this part of the trial to try to minimize any risks to your health.”*

*“There is a potential risk that is more difficult for researchers to address, and that is the possibility that you could be exposed to or even acquire a new HIV viral strain or transmit HIV to a sex partner(s) during the time when you have paused taking your HIV treatment. Both of these consequences need to be avoided. This could complicate treatment options in the future for you and your sexual partners. Is it okay for us to discuss this now?”*

<pause>

*In this trial, you will be pausing your HIV treatment to help researchers answer some important scientific questions. While we (researchers) are making steady progress in developing cure strategies, most participants will see their HIV viral load become detectable or ‘rebound’ during the treatment interruption.*

*This is where partner protections come into play. Because HIV has ‘rebounded,’ you will no longer be ‘undetectable,’ and you are at risk of transmitting HIV to sex partner(s) or people with whom you share needles or works at any time during this part of the trial. Once you pause taking your HIV medications, you should assume that your viral load may be (or become) detectable. The ‘U = U’ message (Undetectable means Untransmittable) does not apply during your treatment interruption. You may need to take other steps to help keep your partner(s) safe from HIV.*

*Do you have any questions about what is expected to happen during the treatment interruption phase?*

<pause>

*Now I would like to ask for your permission to ask some questions about your sex life and preferences for preventing sex partner(s) from acquiring HIV. Is this OK?*

*You can decline to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. Also, if this is not the right time, or if you might feel more comfortable speaking with someone else, please let me know and we will accommodate your preferences.*

<pause>

*Because HIV will no longer be ‘undetectable’ during this part of the study, we are recommending that, in addition to condoms, your sex partners without HIV use additional HIV prevention measures. If you are comfortable, we could discuss ways to reduce risk of transmitting HIV during your treatment interruption. I could review some ways to keep yourself and your sex partners safer while still enjoying intimacy.*

<pause>



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*Safer sexual practices could include mutual masturbation, oral sex, and other physical intimacy (kissing, hugging). Reducing the number of sex partners or limiting certain types of sexual activities might help keep you and your partner safer while still meeting your sexual health goals.*

<pause>

*There is still a risk of transmission for a period of time after you re-start your HIV treatment. At a minimum, the research team will ask you to wait to resume unrestricted sexual activity until your viral load has become undetectable for a period of time, typically 6 months.*

### **Counseling Aids:**

HIV Prevention Resources list (National)

List of local resources (PrEP, PEP, etc.) prepared by research team during the site activation process

Partner Protection Package tools (See Counseling Resources section)