

Support Program for Foreign HIV Patients Receiving Medication Within 2 Years - Q&A (Public Edition)

I. What is the “Support Program for Foreign HIV Patients Receiving Medication Within 2 Years in Taiwan” (hereafter referred to as the Support Program)? Is it a long-term, permanent program?

To reduce healthcare barriers for foreign HIV patients in Taiwan and to enhance the effectiveness of HIV prevention and treatment, this program is jointly administered by the Taiwan CDC and Gilead Sciences. It aims to assist foreign HIV patients in Taiwan who do not qualify for government subsidies and must cover their treatment costs themselves, especially those in economically disadvantaged situations, to receive consistent HIV treatment in Taiwan. The program seeks to prevent the increased risks of severe illness and virus transmission due to lack of or interrupted treatment. The program will begin on August 1, 2024 and will continue until the donated medications are exhausted.

II. What are the eligibility criteria for applying to join the Support Program?

(I) Applicants must meet all of the following 3 conditions:

1. A foreign national who has been officially reported and diagnosed with HIV in Taiwan and possesses relevant documentation such as an Alien Resident Certificate (ARC) or National Health Insurance (NHI) card.
2. Has started HIV treatment within 2 years of being diagnosed in Taiwan and does not qualify for subsidies under the “Regulations Governing Subsidies for Treatment Expenses of HIV-Infected Persons,” requiring out-of-pocket payments for treatment in Taiwan.
3. Have no income, are students in Taiwan or have a monthly salary below NT\$48,000.

(II) Individuals who do not have NHI coverage but meet the eligibility criteria may also apply.

III. Where can I apply to join the Support Program? What documents do I need to prepare?

- (I) You can consult with any designated HIV treatment facility nationwide to confirm your eligibility for the program. The facility will submit an application to the region's center for disease control under the Taiwan CDC. Once approved, you can join the program.
- (II) To apply for the program, you need to prepare the following documents:
 - 1. For foreign nationals working in Taiwan: Please prepare your most recent ARC or NHI Card and provide proof of income (such as pay slips, bankbook copies, bank transfer records or documents showing previous enrollment in Labor Insurance or National Health Insurance).
 - 2. For foreign students studying in Taiwan: Please prepare copies of your Resident Certificate or NHI card, along with your student ID.

IV. Where can I find information about designated HIV treatment facilities nationwide?

You can find information about designated HIV treatment facilities at the following website: <https://reurl.cc/Ejdxer>.

V. Why must HIV infection be reported in Taiwan before joining the Support Program?

HIV infection is classified as a notifiable infectious disease in Taiwan. Reporting your infection allows public health officials to provide you with support and counseling. Moreover, once you join the program, to monitor the effectiveness of your HIV treatment, designated HIV treatment facilities will regularly arrange for blood tests to monitor your HIV viral load and CD4 lymphocyte count. Therefore, it is necessary to complete the reporting process in Taiwan to facilitate subsequent medical follow-ups. Your privacy will be protected throughout the reporting and counseling process and medical or public health personnel will not disclose your HIV status. You need not be concerned about confidentiality.

VI. What treatment costs are covered by the program and what expenses will I need to pay out of pocket?

After joining the program, you will receive donated HIV treatment medication (Biktarvy®) and have regular testing for HIV viral load and CD4 lymphocyte count arranged for you. However, you will need to cover certain expenses out of pocket, such as registration fees, consultation fees and other medical-related costs like additional tests, pharmacy service fees and any co-payments or according to relevant National Health Insurance regulations in Taiwan.

VII. Once an eligible applicant submits a request, how long will it take to receive the donated medication?

After the designated HIV treatment facility submits the application and it is approved, arrangements will be made to deliver the medication as soon as possible. The medication should be received within a maximum of 2 weeks.

VIII. After joining the program, how much medication can I receive at each visit?

At your first visit to collect medication, you will receive a one-month supply (1 bottle, each bottle containing 30 tablets). For subsequent visits, based on your condition and doctor's assessment, you may be eligible to receive up to a three-month supply (3 bottles, each bottle containing 30 tablets).

IX. What must I adhere to after joining the Support Program?

After joining the program, you must follow the doctor's instructions for taking your medication and attend regular follow-up appointments. You should also cooperate with blood tests to monitor your HIV viral load and CD4 lymphocyte count to assess your treatment progress. Failure to follow the doctor's instructions for appointments and tests will result in termination from the program. Therefore, it is crucial to adhere to the doctor's instructions for timely follow-ups, medication and testing to maintain the effectiveness of your treatment.

X. Under what circumstances will the Support Program be terminated?

- (I) If you have been reported and treated for HIV in Taiwan for 2 years and have NHI coverage, you can use NHI to receive HIV treatment. In this case, your eligibility for the program will be terminated.
- (II) If you marry a Taiwanese citizen and acquire legal spouse status, according to the “Regulations Governing Subsidies for Treatment Expenses of HIV-Infected Persons,” medical expenses for treatment within the first 2 years can be subsidized by the Taiwan CDC. As a result, your program eligibility will be terminated.
- (III) If you leave Taiwan for more than 3 months, your eligibility for the program will also be terminated.

XI. If I am unable to join the Support Program but still want to stay in Taiwan for treatment, what assistance can I seek?

- (I) You can contact designated HIV treatment facilities or local health bureaus (or offices) to consult about alternative options for receiving treatment in Taiwan.
- (II) In addition to seeking help from designated HIV medical institutions and local health bureaus, you can also reach out to non-governmental organizations involved in HIV prevention and support, such as the Taiwan Lourdes Association (TLA) or the Persons With HIV/AIDS Rights Advocacy Association of Taiwan, for information on obtaining HIV treatment through other means. Contact numbers are as follows:
 1. Taiwan Lourdes Association (TLA): (02)-2371-1406
 2. Persons With HIV/AIDS Rights Advocacy Association of Taiwan: (02)2556-1383