

ITM launches "U=U" HIV campaign to fight stigma

Wear #thebestsmile pins to show your support

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Dit is de omschrijving

The best smile ever is the smile we have when everything is under control, when U = U, because thanks to successful treatment HIV is no longer transmittable through sexual contact. Undetectable equals untransmittable (U=U).

Still, many people are afraid to talk about HIV. Do you want to fight the stigma around HIV like we do, with a smile?

Then look out for our displays and colourful pins. We have 10 different smileys, so you are bound to find the one that suits you! By wearing your pin, you show that you know the U=U message and that you are open to talk to people about HIV without stigmatising those who live with it.

Join us on social media to show as many U=U smileys as possible:

1. Post your selfie, group photo or video with your pin and use #thebestsmile.
2. Tag the account of ITM:
 - Facebook [@ITGITMANTWERP](#)
 - Twitter EN [@ITMAntwerp](#), Twitter NL [@tropischITG](#)
 - Instagram [@itmantwerp](#)
3. Do you have a private account? Then don't forget to make this post public.

#thebestsmile campaign

This new campaign is the 2021 World AIDS Day campaign of the HIV Reference Centre of the Institute of Tropical Medicine.

2021 is a historic year, as 40 years ago the first five cases of what later became known as AIDS were officially reported. After 40 years HIV is still a serious condition for which there is no cure, but fortunately there is very effective treatment. With the right treatment, the virus is suppressed to an undetectable level and therefore HIV is no longer transmitted through sexual contact.

This U=U (undetectable = untransmittable) message has been our there for five years but it is still relatively little-known not just among the general population, but even among care providers and people living with HIV. Research also shows that HIV stigma has increased in medical care.

Therefore, we are launching a campaign to spread the double U=U message through smiley pins: U=U and YOU = YOU. The ten different colours and smileys symbolise diversity and equality. We spread the pins in different HIV Reference Centres in Belgium and ask our colleagues to hand out the pins in other hospitals as well. Patient organisations, pharmacists, dentists, general practitioners, organisations working on stigma and discrimination, politicians, journalists will also receive them.

Wearing the pin shows that you know the U=U message and that you do not stigmatise people living with HIV. This pin is for you, wear it as much as you can, especially on World Aids Day, 1 December.

Do you have questions about living with HIV or U=U? Are you living with HIV and would you like to talk?

- In every [HIV Reference Centre](#) (HRC) you can contact a professional medical and paramedical team. [ITM's HRC](#) is located in the polyclinic.
- [Sensoa Positief](#) supports people with HIV, their environment and professionals who come into contact with HIV. Send a mail to them at positief@sensoa.be or call Sensoa Positive 078 151 100.

Did not get a pin? You can order your own at our social nurses, Wenne wmertens@itg.be and Cora clamonte@itg.be.

The #thebestsmile campaign is an initiative of the social nurses of the HIV Reference Centre within the Institute of Tropical Medicine and was made possible with the support of Gilead, MSD and ViiVhealthcare.