NOT JUST A NUMBER!
UNDERSTANDING YOUR VIRAL LOAD
Hey Sibo!

Hey Sibo, how are you?

Hi Mama I am good thanks. Sup Farai! So, are you visiting the clinic this week?

Oh that’s good. Have you received them before?

Yes, just got a reminder to come in. Something about viral load results. Not even sure what that is about.

No this is the first time; we will get the results tomorrow.
I will be at the clinic tomorrow, so come and let me know how it goes.

Getting your viral load done is so important, it's the best way to know whether your treatment is successfully controlling the virus in your body.

Art is working well and the HIV is being suppressed, you will have a low viral load. Viral load is such a great way to check how you are doing.

So far, as this was your first viral load test, I wanted to make sure you and your mum are clear about why we do it and why it is so important.

But first the great news, your results show that your HIV is 'undetectable'. That means the HIV treatment is working so well.

It is controlling the level of HIV in your body, that it can't be detected.
Having an undetectable viral load means the immune system is protected, so it won't be affected by other infections.

It also means it can't be passed to others because it is in such low levels. This is a great achievement, Farai.

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Undetectable = Untransmittable!

HIV cannot be passed on to sexual partners or babies.
So now you must keep up the good work. We will do the viral load test every 6 months and you will be able to track your progress.

Staying with an undetectable viral load is your aim.

The way to do that is to keep adhering to your medicines and asking for help from your mum or me or Sibo. If you are struggling at all, we can all help you to stay undetectable.
But when Farai takes every dose, he will keep the HIV in his body at very low levels so it is undetectable.

If you stop the treatment or the medicine stops working, the HIV levels can increase again and that can make you vulnerable to infections.

So, nurse does this mean the HIV has gone?

No, the medicines can't remove HIV, it will always be there.
SO WE WILL KEEP TESTING FOR VIRAL LOAD REGULARLY TO MAKE SURE LEVELS DON'T INCREASE.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR RESULT, DO ASK AS IT'S IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO KNOW AND KEEP TRACK. VIRAL LOAD WILL BE SOMETHING THAT YOU NEED TO MONITOR FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

BUT THIS WILL GIVE YOU THE CONFIDENCE THAT YOU ARE ADHERING WELL AND YOUR TREATMENT IS WORKING.

I HOPE THAT HELPS EXPLAIN HOW IMPORTANT IT IS. KEEP IT UP FARAI AND I WILL SEE YOU SOON.
Hey Farai how did it go?

Yeh good, I am undetectable.

That's so cool! It's a good feeling hey?

DID YOU KNOW I HAVE BEEN UNDETECTABLE FOR 9 YEARS! KNOWING YOUR VIRAL LOAD IS GREAT.

It helps to motivate me to stay in control of HIV, keep my immune system working well and that keeps my body healthy.
It's also great knowing you can't pass on the virus. Keep it up Farai that is an awesome result.

Don't forget that it can change so make sure you get the viral load done regularly.

Any issues you know I am here to help. It is hard work I know but with support and effort, the treatment can do great things and it means you can do all the things you want to do.

Thanks Sibo!

No worries. Catch you next week.
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