

Africa gets generic version of most effective HIV drug

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HIV infecting a human cell. Credit: NIH

The generic version of the most advanced drug against HIV has been

introduced in Kenya, a first in Africa where more than 25 million have the disease, the NGO Unitaid said Wednesday.

The drug, Dolutegravir (DTG) is the anti-retroviral drug of choice for those living with HIV in developed countries, but its high price has put it out of reach for most struggling with the disease in Africa.

"The generic DTG has two advantages: on the one hand, it is very good from a pharmaceutical point of view. On the other hand, it is much cheaper," said Robert Matiru of Unitaid, which works to reduce the costs of medicines treating AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria.

He described the drug as "the most effective HIV treatment currently on the market."

A box of 30 pills of DTG, which lasts a month, costs between \$25 (21 euros) and \$50. The [generic version](#) only costs \$4.

Kenya has already started rolling out the new drug, which will initially be provided for free to 27,000 people living with HIV who are intolerant to the side effects of the current best drug used in the country.

It will become available nationwide later in the year, and will also be rolled out in Nigeria and Uganda.

The [drug](#) is easier to take than those currently on the market, requiring only one pill a day, causing fewer side effects, and patients are less likely to develop resistance, said Matiru.

Around 37 million people live with HIV/AIDS around the world, 70 percent of them in Africa, according to 2015 statistics from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

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