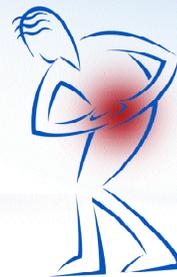


Quick Tips for Positive Types

JUST WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Diarrhea



What is it & why does it matter?

Diarrhea (frequent, loose, watery stools) is a common problem for people with HIV. It can result from a number of possible causes, including:

- ◆ the virus itself;
- ◆ the antiretroviral drugs used to fight HIV;
- ◆ an infection: bacterial, viral, or parasitic;
- ◆ inability to digest milk products (lactose intolerance); lipid malabsorption; or
- ◆ emotional stress.

Diarrhea may go away on its own, or it may last for a long time.

QuickTip:

If diarrhea continues for an extended period of time, it can lead to dehydration, weight loss and wasting. Speak with your doctor or pharmacist for suggestions on how to manage it.

Why does it matter?

Diarrhea can cause large amounts of water and minerals (such as potassium and sodium) to be lost from the body. This can lead to **dehydration** and other health problems. Over time, diarrhea can lead to **weight loss and wasting** by preventing nutrients from being fully absorbed from food. It may also cause sufferers to stay indoors or close to a bathroom, **limiting daily activities**.



Managing diarrhea

Medications & supplements

Some medications may interact with your antiretroviral drugs. This could prevent them from fighting HIV as well as they should. Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist before using any medications or supplements, including those you can get without a prescription.

Here are some medications and supplements that may be prescribed to help with diarrhea:

- ◆ *Products that contain "soluble" fibre, such as psyllium:* for example, Metamucil*. (These are often used to help with constipation, but they can also help with diarrhea by adding more "bulk" to stools and absorbing excess water).
- ◆ *Nutritional supplements:* calcium, L-glutamine protein powder, probiotics (in capsules or from yogurt with acidophilus bacteria - check the label to confirm).
- ◆ *Medications available without a prescription:* Lactaid* or Imodium*.
- ◆ *Medications that require a prescription:* Lomotil*, Cotazym*, or others.

Nutrition

What you eat can have a big impact on diarrhea. Some foods can cause diarrhea or make it worse, while others can help. Here is a list of foods you should try to include and ones to avoid:

Try to Include	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Clear fluids: drink small amounts regularly through the day to stay well hydrated. Try water, clear juices, nectar, rice water or electrolyte drinks. ✓ Increase the amount of sodium in your diet, by adding salt to your food or eating salty foods, like soda crackers. ✓ Foods with soluble fibre: Certo (fruit pectin), psyllium fibre, available as either a powder or in bars (1 Tbsp in 1/2 cup of juice or applesauce or 1 bar at every meal), bananas, applesauce, white rice, oatmeal, oat bran, carrots and pears. ✓ Alternatives to dairy products such as rice or soya milk, or products with Lactaid* or Lacteeze*. ✓ Starchy foods: oatmeal, cream of wheat, potatoes, rice, pasta or white bread ✓ Boiled eggs, fish, chicken ✓ Foods high in potassium, like bananas, oranges, potatoes, tomato juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Foods that can cause cramps and bloating, like beans, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, garlic, onions, and melons ✗ Chocolate, caffeine and alcohol ✗ Fried, fatty and spicy foods ✗ Dairy products such as milk (but firm cheeses and low-fat yogurt might be okay) ✗ Raw fruits or vegetables (especially skins and seeds), nuts, whole grain breads and cereals (the “insoluble” fibre in these foods can make diarrhea worse). ✗ Foods that have a laxative effect, such as prunes and sorbitol (often found in “sugar-free” products)

When you eat is also important: try eating smaller amounts of food, more frequently, rather than large meals. And, if your antiretroviral medications can be taken with food, try taking them in the middle or at the end of meals.

Lifestyle

Practice careful hygiene to **avoid infections that may cause diarrhea**:

- ✓ Wash hands regularly.
- ✓ Ensure food is safe to eat:
 - ◆ Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold - don't let food sit at room temperature.
 - ◆ Check expiration dates on food labels and ensure food is fresh (especially meat, poultry, fish and dairy products).
 - ◆ Ensure meat, fish, poultry and eggs are cooked thoroughly.
 - ◆ Wash fruits and vegetables carefully.



When should I call my doctor?

You should call your doctor right away or go to your nearest emergency health centre if:

- ◆ diarrhea occurs after you have used antibiotics for a long time, or following a recent trip to a tropical country.
- ◆ you have diarrhea more than five times in one day.
- ◆ the diarrhea continues for more than five days, and is accompanied by abdominal pain and weight loss.
- ◆ you see blood in the diarrhea.
- ◆ you have a fever.

Remember, you don't need to manage these symptoms on your own.

Talk to your healthcare team - they can help.