

Preventing Toxo

Toxoplasmosis, or commonly known as “toxo,” is an infection among people with HIV that usually affects the central nervous system, including the brain. Many people infected with toxo have no symptoms, but people with HIV often get headaches, confusion, and fevers from the infection. Here are some ways to help avoid getting toxo:

- Don't eat undercooked or raw red meat.
- Wash your hands well after touching raw meat.
- Wash your hands well after gardening, yard work, and other outdoor activities.

- Wash all fruits and vegetables well before eating them raw.
- Avoid stray cats and kittens.
- Take special care if you have a cat:
 - If you adopt or buy a cat, get one that is healthy and at least 1 year old.
 - Ask someone who is not infected with HIV and is not pregnant to change the litter box.
 - Keep your cat indoors.
 - Feed your cat only cat food or thoroughly cooked meat.

Source: CDC (www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/brochures/toxo.htm).



On the Lookout for Common STDs

Testing and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can help prevent the spread of HIV. If someone infected with HIV is also infected with another STD, that person is more likely to transmit HIV through sexual contact.

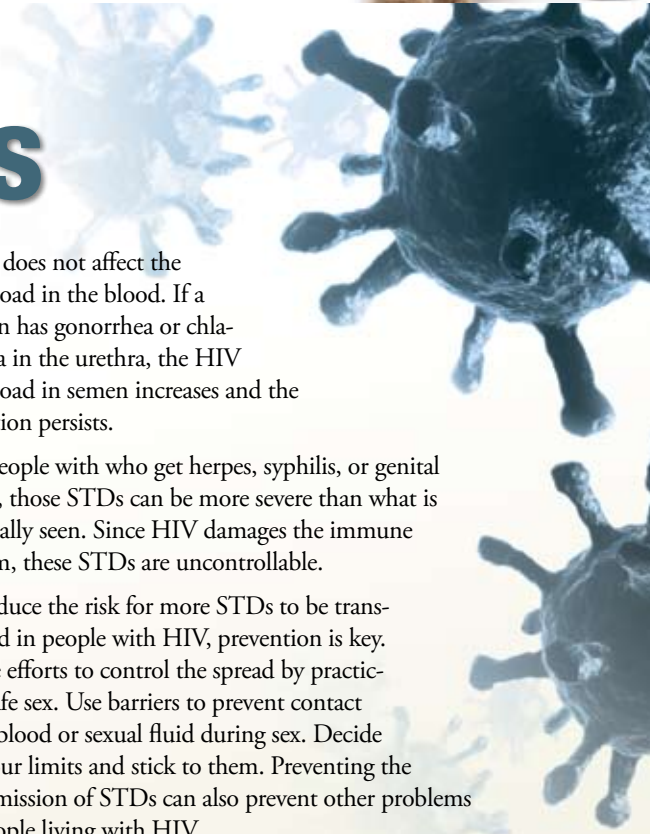
When people already have HIV and get gonorrhea or chlamydia, they are more infectious to others. In men with gonorrhea and chlamydia, the HIV viral load in semen increases. Antibiotic treat-

ment does not affect the viral load in the blood. If a person has gonorrhea or chlamydia in the urethra, the HIV viral load in semen increases and the infection persists.

For people with who get herpes, syphilis, or genital warts, those STDs can be more severe than what is normally seen. Since HIV damages the immune system, these STDs are uncontrollable.

To reduce the risk for more STDs to be transmitted in people with HIV, prevention is key. Make efforts to control the spread by practicing safe sex. Use barriers to prevent contact with blood or sexual fluid during sex. Decide on your limits and stick to them. Preventing the transmission of STDs can also prevent other problems in people living with HIV.

Sources: CDC (www.cdc.gov/STD/hiv/STDFact-STD&HIV.htm) and TheBody.com (www.thebody.com/content/art2283.html).



Protect Yourself Against MRSA

Staph bacteria, including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), can cause skin infections that may look like pimples or boils. They are sometimes red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.

When you have HIV, your immune system is weakened. You may be at risk for more severe illnesses if you get infected with MRSA. Here are 4 things you can do to protect yourself against MRSA infections:

1. Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
3. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
4. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

Source: CDC (www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_MRSA_ca_public.html).

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Healthy Living With HIV



Taking Care of Your Liver

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Taking Care of Your Liver

Coinfection with HIV and the hepatitis virus is a growing public health concern. The diseases are spread in similar ways, and many people are coinfecting. With management, coinfection can be successfully treated.

Hepatitis is an infection of the liver that can lead to serious problems such as cirrhosis and liver cancer over time. HIV infection leads to more aggressive hepatitis and a higher risk of liver damage. Although hepatitis does not make HIV disease progress more quickly, coinfection may impair the ability of the immune system to recover after starting antiretroviral therapy. In most cases, doctors will try to control HIV before beginning patients on treatment for hepatitis. The good news is most people with coinfection can be successfully treated for both HIV and hepatitis.

Protect Yourself

Your liver depends on you to take care of it. The problem is your liver is a silent partner; when something's wrong, it doesn't complain until the damage is far advanced. It needs

your help every day to keep it healthy and hepatitis-free. To do that, you need to eat a healthy diet, exercise, get lots of fresh air, and avoid things that can cause liver damage.

Three things should be avoided for good liver health:

1. Avoid excessive alcohol. Most people know that the liver acts as a filter and that it can be badly damaged by drinking too much alcohol. Liver specialists suggest that more than 2 drinks a day for men and more than 1 drink a day for women may even be too much for some people.

2. Avoid drugs taken with alcohol. Some drugs should never be taken with alcoholic beverages. Many drugs—prescribed, over-the-counter, and herbal medications—are made up of chemicals that could hurt your liver cells, especially taken with alcohol.

3. Avoid environmental pollutants. Fumes from paint thinners, bug sprays, and other aerosol sprays are picked up by the blood vessels in your lungs and carried to your liver. There, it becomes detoxified and discharges into your bile. The amount and concentration of those chemicals should be controlled to prevent liver damage.

Here are some tips:

- Have good ventilation.
- Use a mask.
- Cover your skin.
- Wash off any chemicals you get on your skin with soap and water as soon as possible.

Diet Matters: What to Watch For

Poor nutrition isn't typically a cause of liver disease, but good nutrition may help liver cells damaged by hepatitis viruses to form new liver cells. Nutrition can be an essential part of treatment. Here are some tips to getting a well-balanced diet that protects your liver:

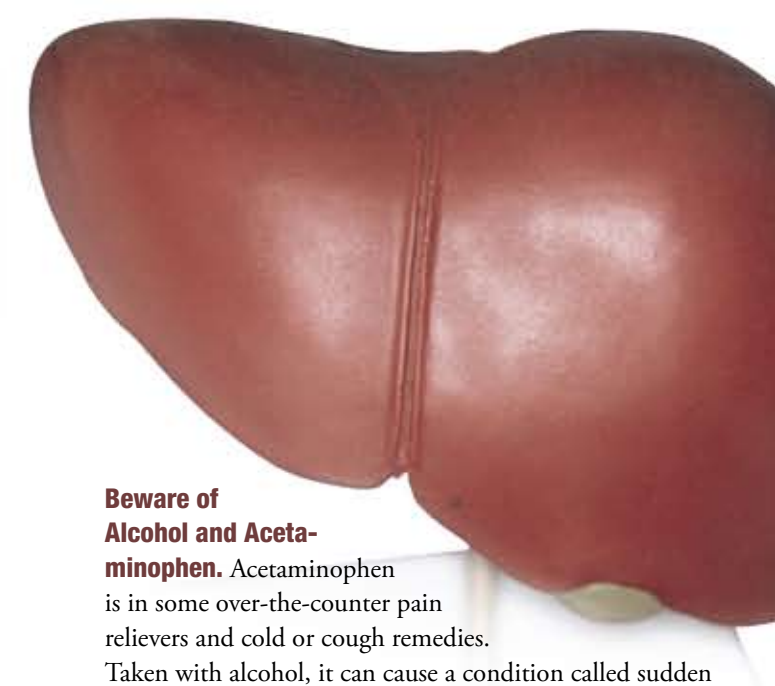
Watch the Protein. Too much daily protein may cause mental confusion. To quickly determine your daily protein in grams, divide your weight in pounds by 2.

Watch the Calories. Excess calories can add to liver dysfunction and cause fat deposits in the liver.

Watch the Salt. If you have fluid retention and swelling of the abdomen or legs, you may need a diet low in salt to avoid sodium retention. Avoid certain foods to reduce sodium intake. Read food labels carefully.

Watch Vitamins A and D. Too much of some vitamins may stress the liver to make it work harder as a filter for the body. Mega-vitamin supplements, particularly if they contain vitamins A and D, may be harmful.

Beware of Alcohol. Stop drinking alcohol of any type completely to give your liver a chance to heal, rebuild, and grow new liver cells.



Beware of Alcohol and Acetaminophen.

Acetaminophen is in some over-the-counter pain relievers and cold or cough remedies. Taken with alcohol, it can cause a condition called sudden and severe hepatitis, which could cause fatal liver failure. Talk to your doctor if you have doubts about what drugs to take simultaneously.

Beware of “Nutritional Therapies.” Herbal treatments and alternative liver drugs can be dangerous.

Source: Hepatitis Foundation (www.hepfi.org/living/liv_caring.html).

Learn More

The month of May is Hepatitis Awareness Month, and May 19 is World Hepatitis Day (see information box below). Information about hepatitis can be found at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis. For information on World Hepatitis Day, go to www.worldhepatitisday.org. The Hepatitis Foundation (www.hepfi.org) is another good source of information on hepatitis and caring for your liver.

In addition to these resources, be sure to talk with your doctor about hepatitis and how your HIV might impact it. A big part of managing hepatitis is having an open, trust-based relationship with your caregiver. Good communication is always a 2-way street: the better it is, the better your care is likely to be.

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month!

Every year, the month of May is Hepatitis Awareness Month in the United States. Also, May 19 is World Hepatitis Day. Each of the events is intended to draw attention to the burden of disease and death that has been linked to hepatitis. These events also stress the importance of prevention and early detection. World Hepatitis Day is coordinated by the World Hepatitis Alliance. The website—www.worldhepatitisday.org—gives users ways to get involved in the event and information on the virus.

Source: CDC (www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5818a5.htm?s_cid=mm5818a5_e).

