

Candidiasis: Spotting the Warning Signs

Candidiasis is an infection caused by a common fungus called *Candida*. The fungus normally lives in the body, but healthy immune systems keep it under control. *Candida* usually infects the mouth, throat, or vagina. Infection can occur months or years before other, more serious opportunistic infections develop. Although there is no way to prevent exposure, you can avoid outbreaks by strengthening your immune system by taking antiretroviral drugs.

Most *Candida* infections are easily treated with local therapies, which include creams, suppositories (to treat vaginitis), liquids, and “troches” or “lozenges” that dissolve in the mouth. Systemic anti-fungal drugs may be needed if local treatments don’t work, or if the infection has spread into the throat or other parts of the body. Some natural therapies (garlic, acidophilus, and others) seem to help, but they haven’t been carefully studied to prove that they work. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you think you have candidiasis.

Source: TheBody.com (www.thebody.com/content/treat/art6115.html).



Eat Right, *Feel Right*

Good nutrition is important to living a healthy lifestyle, especially if you’re living with HIV. By eating right, you can help boost immune function and maximize the effectiveness of anti-HIV drugs. You can also reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis. In general, good nutrition can improve your overall quality of life.

The Basics

The traditional food pyramid was replaced in 2005 with a new pyramid, available at www.MyPyramid.gov.

It recommends the following:

- 6-11 servings per day of grain products (eg, bread, cereal, rice, and pasta).
- 3-5 servings of vegetables.
- 2-4 servings of fruit.

- 2-3 servings of dairy products (eg, milk, yogurt, and cheese).
- 2-3 servings of high-protein foods (eg, meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and legumes).
- Small amounts of fat, oil, and sugar.

Understand that “servings” are smaller than many people realize. Check the labels on food packaging to be sure.

One Size Won’t Fit All

There is no single diet that will be appropriate for every person living with HIV. Instead, people living with the virus should adopt a sensible, balanced diet. The American Dietetic Association is one group that offers tools to help you eat right (www.eatright.org). Talk with an experienced nutrition specialist or your doctor so that they can come up with a plan that works best for you.

Source: EatRight.org <http://www.eatright.org/Public/content.aspx?id=206>.

Getting Help for Pain

Pain, especially chronic pain, is often undertreated and misdiagnosed in people with HIV. Pain can be from the HIV itself, anti-HIV drugs, or other, unrelated conditions. There are many kinds of medications available to effectively treat pain, but doctors may be reluctant to use some of them because they can be addictive.

If you’re experiencing pain, be honest with your doctors. Tell them that you’re having pain, and be open about any issues you have about substance use. If you’re in recovery, talk with your doctors about ways to take pain drugs without triggering a relapse. If you think your doctors aren’t providing adequate pain treatment because they’re worried you might abuse it, talk about your concerns and ask for closely supervised treatment and support. The pain people with HIV have is real, so make sure it’s checked out and treated as part of regular medical care.

Source: TheBody.com (www.thebody.com/content/treat/art4848.html).

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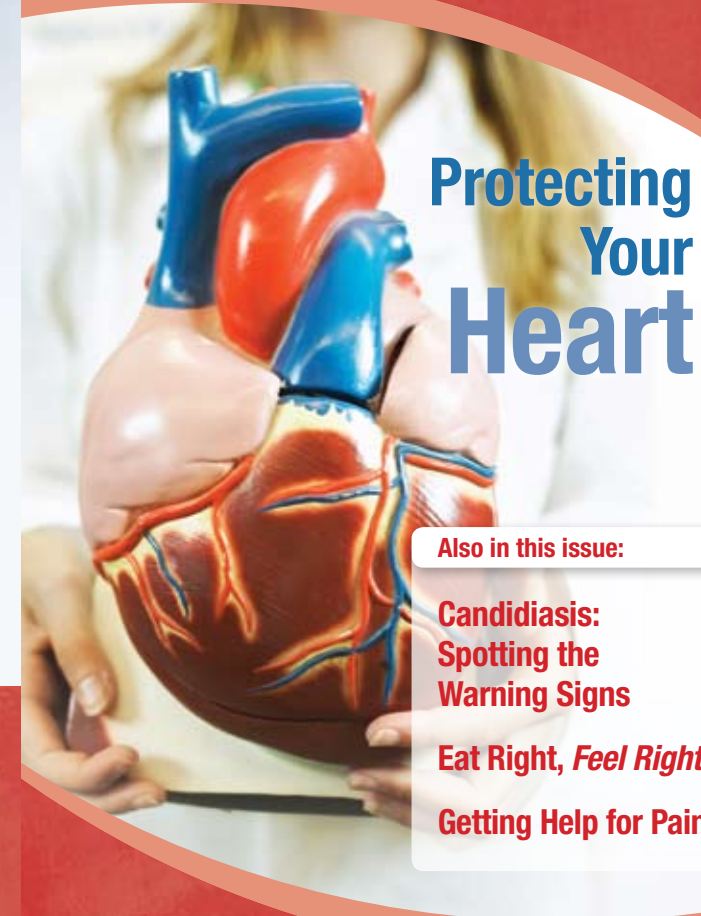
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PEC-HL-FEB-025

Healthy Living With HIV



Protecting Your Heart

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www.patientedu.org/hiv



Protecting Your Heart

Because HIV treatments have become so effective, people with HIV are living longer than ever before. Some studies show that heart disease is the cause of 20% of deaths among people with HIV. The good news is that it's possible to dramatically reduce your risk of heart disease.

Within just a few weeks of quitting, you may experience all or some of the following:

- Decreases in your blood pressure.
- Better blood circulation.
- Improved lung function.
- Enhanced sense of taste and smell.

After 1 year of being off cigarettes, your risk of heart disease can be cut in half of that of a smoker. After 5 years, your risk of a stroke decreases to the same level it would have been if you never picked up cigarettes in the first place.

Watch your diet. When it comes to protecting your heart, diet can make a big difference. Eating a lot of saturated fat and processed sugars increases your risk of both heart disease and diabetes. On the other hand, people who eat healthier foods appear to be protected from heart disease.

How much you eat also contributes to how much you weigh. Keeping a healthy weight can be challenging, but it's possible. The American Heart Association (see box to the right) provides several guides to heart-healthy eating that you might find useful.

Some other suggestions are to:

- Find out how many calories you should eat and drink to maintain your body weight or to lose or gain weight.
- Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups each day.
- Cut back on beverages with added sugars (eg, fruit juice drinks and sodas).

The most important thing you can do to protect your heart is to reduce risk factors for heart disease. For example, people who quit smoking can reduce their risk of heart attack and stroke by nearly 300% within 10 years. Diet and exercise can also reduce heart risks greatly. These behavioral changes, along with good medical management, can also help people who've already had a heart attack or who have significantly clogged arteries.

When trying to protect your heart, think about the following:

Quit smoking. Smoking causes chronic inflammation of the blood vessels and the heart. It also negatively affects cholesterol, increases blood pressure, and can lead to emphysema and lung cancer. Even though it may be tough, quitting smoking has many rewards.

- Drink alcohol in moderation: about 1 drink per day for women and 2 for men.

- Plan ahead when grocery shopping or eating out.

Get active. Physical exercise doesn't just give your heart a workout. It also leads to other chemical changes that benefit your whole health. Exercise can strengthen your heart, reduce blood pressure, and improve your cholesterol levels and your mood. Aerobic (think jogging) and resistance (think weight training) exercise are both beneficial because they help improve heart health and keep you fit into older age. They burn excess calories and improve the way your body metabolizes food and processes cholesterol and blood sugar. Exercise may also help if you're battling depression.

Best of all is that a gym membership isn't always required. Simply taking a brisk walk and keeping up your heart rate for at least 30 minutes may be enough for some people.

Reduce stress. Chronic stress can increase your blood pressure and raise stress hormones. Dealing with it in constructive ways will help minimize the negative effects it can have on your heart and your health. Seek out activities that relax the body and refocus the mind away from negative thinking. Try meditation or counseling. Work with case managers and social workers at clinics and AIDS service organizations to handle financial pressures.

Consider medication. When lifestyle changes don't do the trick—or aren't enough to bring your lipid levels under control—a number of drugs can improve cholesterol and triglycerides. Be sure to talk to your doctor before starting these drugs.

Source: AIDSmeds.com (www.aidsmeds.com/articles/Hyperlipidemia_4810.shtml).

February is American Heart Month!

Heart diseases, including stroke, are the leading killer in the United States. During American Heart Month, the American Heart Association has thousands of its volunteers visit their neighbors. Their goal is to raise funds for research and education. Another goal is to pass along information about heart disease and stroke. To learn more about what you can do during American Heart Month, go to www.americanheart.org.

Source: American Heart Association (www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4441).

