

Avoiding Crypto

Cryptosporidiosis, commonly called “crypto,” is a disease caused by a small parasite. It causes diarrhea, stomach cramps, and fever. You get crypto by putting anything in your mouth that has been in contact with feces (solid waste or bowel movements) from people or animals infected with crypto. Most people who get crypto have watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, an upset stomach, or a slight fever. In some people, the diarrhea can be so severe that they lose weight.

To prevent yourself from getting crypto, follow these tips:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Practice safer sex.
- Be careful around animals.
- Be careful when swimming or using hot tubs.
- Wash and/or cook your food.
- Drink safe water or bottled water (*boil, distill, or filter water, if need be*).
- Other safe drinks include:
 - Carbonated drinks in cans or bottles.
 - Fruit drinks in cans or bottles.
 - Steaming hot tea or coffee.
 - Pasteurized dairy products.
 - Pasteurized juices.

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

A Focus on Men's Health

Men living with HIV need to also take care of other health issues and prevent diseases. Screening tests can find diseases earlier and at a time when they're easier to treat.

Health experts have made the following recommendations about health issues to screen:

Obesity: Have your body mass index, or BMI, calculated to screen for obesity.

High Cholesterol: Have your cholesterol checked regularly starting at age 35. If you're younger than 35, talk to your doctor about whether to have your cholesterol checked if:

- You have diabetes.
- You have high blood pressure.
- Heart disease runs in your family.
- You smoke.

High Blood Pressure: Have your blood pressure checked at least every 2 years. High blood pressure is 140/90 mg/dL or higher.

Colorectal Cancer: Have a test for colorectal cancer starting

at age 50. Your doctor can help you decide which test is right for you. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer, you may need to be screened earlier.

Diabetes: Have a test for diabetes if you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

Depression: If you have felt “down,” sad, or hopeless over the last 2 weeks or have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things, you may be depressed. Talk to your doctor about being screened for depression.

Sexually Transmitted Infections: Talk to your doctor to see whether you should be tested for gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, or other sexually transmitted infections.

Source: AHRQ (www.ahrq.gov/ppip/Healthymen.htm).

National Men's Health Week—June 14-20

The purpose of National Men's Health Week is to raise awareness of preventable health problems among men and boys. It's designed to encourage early detection and treatment of diseases. Activities include health fairs, conferences, screenings, and other events.

For more information, go to www.menshealthmonth.org.

Source: Men's Health Month (www.menshealthmonth.org/week/).

Living With Pets

Owning a pet can be rewarding for people living with HIV. The good news is most people with HIV can and should keep their pets. Pets can help you feel psychologically and even physically better. For many people, pets are more than just animals—they're like members of the family. There are, however, some health risks of owning a pet or caring for animals. **To protect yourself, be sure to:**

- Wash your hands well after playing with animals.
- Be careful about what your pet eats and drinks.
- Don't touch stray animals.
- Have someone without HIV and who is not pregnant change your litter boxes daily.
- Have your cat's nails clipped.
- Don't let your pet lick your mouth or any open cuts or wounds you may have.
- Avoid reptiles and exotic pets.
- Wear gloves when you clean aquariums or animal cages.

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

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PEC-HL-JUN-027

June/July 2010

Healthy Living With HIV

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Sail Away Safely

Travel Tips for Those With HIV

It's summertime, and you may be thinking about planning vacations or traveling. People living with HIV are at greater risk of getting infections and diseases than those without the virus, but that shouldn't prevent you from traveling home or overseas. With proper planning for safe travel practices, there's no reason you can't fully enjoy the journey.

When you travel, you risk coming into contact with germs you might not find at home. Many of these germs can make you very sick. When living with HIV, it's important that you have all the facts. Travel, especially to developing countries, can raise your risk of getting opportunistic infections. When you travel, be sure to know your medical risks and take steps to protect yourself (*see below*).

Messages to Remember

- Talk to your doctor about your travel plans before your trip.
- Take special care with food and water.
- If your doctor has you on a special diet, stick with it.
- Take all medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- Protect your health (*and the health of others*) just as you do at home.

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

Before You Travel

Talk to your doctor or an expert in travel medicine about health risks in the area you plan to visit. They can tell you how to keep yourself healthy when you go to places where certain illnesses are a problem. They also can tell you about places that might not be safe for you to visit. Ask them if they know of doctors who treat people with HIV in the area you plan to visit.

One of the most important things you can do before traveling is to plan in advance for problems that might come up. Traveler's diarrhea, for example, is a common problem. You should carry a 3- to 7-day supply of antibiotics to treat it. A common drug for traveler's diarrhea is ciprofloxacin. If you're pregnant, your doctor may suggest you take trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, or TMP-SMX instead.

Insect-borne diseases are another major problem in many areas. Take a good supply of an insect repellent that contains 30% or less "Deet" with you. Plan to sleep under a mosquito net, preferably one treated with permethrin, in places where there is malaria or dengue fever. Unless you need to go there, avoid areas where yellow fever is found.

Ask your doctor if you need to take medicine or get special vaccinations before you travel. Your doctor will also know the best ways to protect you from such things as malaria, typhoid fever, and hepatitis. Make sure all your routine vaccinations are up to date. This is a very important note, especially for HIV-infected children who are traveling.

If you are leaving the United States, make sure you know if the countries you plan to visit have special health rules for visitors. These rules can include vaccinations that may not be safe for HIV-infected people to take. Your doctor or local health department can help you with this.

If you have medical insurance, check to see what it covers when you are away from home. Many insurance plans have limited benefits outside the U.S. Very few plans cover the cost of flying you back to the states if you become very sick. Make sure your paperwork is in order, and take along proof of insurance when you travel.

To help make sure that you get the most fun from your trip, protect your health just as you do at home.

When You Travel

Food and water in developing countries may not be as clean as they are at home. These items might contain bacteria, viruses, or parasites that could make you sick.

Also, don't eat the following:

- Raw fruits and vegetables that you do not peel yourself.
- Raw or undercooked seafood or meat.
- Unpasteurized dairy products.
- Anything from a street vendor.

Also, do not drink tap water, drinks made with tap water or with ice made from tap water, or unpasteurized milk.

Food and drinks that are generally safe include:

- Steaming-hot foods.
- Fruits that you peel yourself.
- Bottled drinks (*especially carbonated*).
- Hot coffee or tea.
- Beer and wine.

You can also drink water that you bring to a rolling boil for 1 full minute. If you can't boil your water, filter and treat it with iodine or chlorine. This, however, won't work as well as boiling.

Tuberculosis (TB) is common throughout the world and can be severe in people with HIV. Avoid hospitals and clinics where coughing TB patients are treated. When back in the U.S., have your doctor test you for TB.

In many places, animals may roam more freely than they do in the U.S. If you think animals have left droppings on beaches or other areas, always wear shoes and protective clothing. Sit on a towel to avoid direct contact with the sand or soil. Swimming can make you sick if you swallow the water. Never swim in water that might contain even very small amounts of sewage or animal waste.

Ultimately, the key to safe travel when living with HIV is to protect your health just as you do at home. This will help make sure that you get the most fun from your trip!

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

