



HIV IN THE BODY

HIV is a virus that weakens the immune system, which protects your body against infection and disease. When your immune system is weak, your body cannot fight infections and diseases. If HIV is not treated with ARVs, you can get a collection of diseases called Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

IMMUNE SYSTEM IS WEAKENED



GETTING TREATMENT FOR HIV

Antiretroviral treatment (ARVs) are medications that are the only way to control HIV. Adherence – taking ARVs as told by a healthcare worker - reduces the amount of HIV in the body: the CD4 count goes up and the immune system recovers. This is called *viral suppression*. This does not mean HIV has been cured, it means there is only a small amount of HIV in the blood, that you will enjoy better health, and that there is less chance of transmitting HIV to somebody else.

VIRAL SUPPRESSION



HIV AND THE AGEING PROCESS

Taking your ARVs correctly will keep your viral load suppressed and your immune system strong. It is also important to stay healthy and motivated as you get older with HIV.

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“I still have a lot to do. I want to show people that it doesn't matter how old you are, you can survive with HIV. Having the right mindset and taking your medication can help you do it.”

Cindy Pivacic



LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS OF ARVs

Taking ARVs for many years can have long-term side effects. These differ from person to person, and some people may not experience any long-term effects.

Talk to your healthcare worker about any new symptoms so that they can help you manage them. They may give you new medication to treat these side effects and may change your ARV regimen.

Some side effects can be managed through medication and/or through lifestyle changes.

COMMON LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS OF ARVs	THINGS YOU CAN DO TO STAY HEALTHY
Diabetes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to keep your weight down. • Eat a healthier diet. • Stay active. • Stop smoking.
Weakening of the bones (osteoporosis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do weight-bearing exercise like walking, jogging or climbing stairs. • Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. • Increase calcium and vitamins D and K. • Be careful not to fall. • Reduce stress. • Get more sleep.
Kidney problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get regular kidney function tests. • Drink plenty of water. • Cut down on salt. • Eat a healthier diet.
Heart disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat a healthier diet. • Stay active. • Stop smoking. • Reduce stress.
Liver damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get regular liver function tests. • Avoid alcohol and drugs.
High cholesterol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose foods low in trans fats. • Eat more fiber-rich foods. • Reduce alcohol. • Stay active.
Changes in how the body uses and stores fat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat a healthier diet. • Stay active.
Nervous system problems (sleeping problems, depression, and dizziness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get more sleep. • Cut down on alcohol. • Exercise your brain by playing memory games, word games and writing by hand.