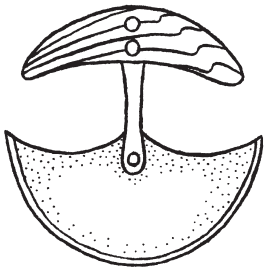
Information for Inuit Community Members

Fact Sheet 3 HIV/AIDS -Related Illnesses



PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

This is a big word for a common side effect of HIV medicine. It is a feeling of numbness, tingling, or burning feeling in your feet, toes, legs, hands or arms. Not everyone gets this side effect and for most people it is not difficult to handle. It is important to report any of these feelings to your doctor so he/she knows how the medicine is working in your body. The doctor may decide to change the medicine you take or change the amount of some of the medicine you take because you are having peripheral neuropathy.

There are some things that can help make it less likely that you will have these feelings. One of the best things you can do is to take your medicine on a regular schedule the way the doctor tells you to. It will also help if you get in the habit of eating at the same time of the day, every day.

Some people with HIV or AIDS have found that the following vitamins or minerals help make it easier to handle the numbness or other feelings. You may want to try taking the following:

- Alpha-lipoic acid (about 600 mg per day)
- Vitamin B12 (1mg per day or 3 times a week)
- B-complex pill (25-50mg B vitamins per day)

Different things work for different people. Try any of the following and see if they help!

- Wear loose fitting shoes and socks
- Try not to stand still for too long in one place
- Soak your feet or hands in cold water everyday for a few minutes
- Put a pillow under your hands or feet when you are in bed sleeping
- Keep heavy covers off the part of your body that is bothering you
- Get 20 minutes of regular exercise at least three times a week as this can really help to increase circulation in your hands and feet

If you find the numbness or tingling painful at times it is okay for you to take ibuprofen, like Motrin or Advil. If the pain gets worse or you get it more often talk to your doctor. Your doctor will be able to recommend other pain medicine that might help.