



DRUG SIDE EFFECTS

The medicines that make up the AIDS cocktail (combination therapy) sometimes cause changes in your body. Different people have different reactions. The information in this Fact Sheet is to help you be prepared for some of the changes that may happen so you are not frightened by them.

The shape of your body will likely change a bit after you start using the AIDS cocktail. The changes in the shape of your body are not harmful. But if you notice something very strange about the way you look, then talk to your doctor, nurse or CHR about this.

Here is what happens:

In some people, fat can build up in certain parts of the body, making them larger. Fat often increases in the following areas:

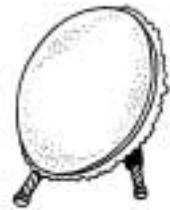
- ◆ stomach
- ◆ breasts
- ◆ back of the shoulders

Other parts of the body can lose fat, making them look thinner. Fat often disappears from the following parts of the body:

- ◆ face
- ◆ arms
- ◆ legs



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Other things that can happen — side effects

Not everyone has the same side effects, in fact, some people have few or none. Often people focus all of their energy on side effects and when they do they feel even worse.

Some side effects you may feel are:

- ◆ headache
- ◆ nausea
- ◆ diarrhea
- ◆ dry mouth

Keeping track of these feelings can help your doctor and alert him or her to other problems with your health. **Use the event tracker forms in Booklet Seven** to keep track of side effects that concern you. Take your notes with you when you visit your doctor. He or she may be able to help make the side effects easier to deal with. Most side effects go away after a short time. It is important to remember that side effects can be a sign that the medicine is fighting HIV in a person's body.

If your side effects last longer than a few days or they get worse, it is important to talk to your doctor, nurse or CHR. Do not wait until your next visit.



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Common questions about the AIDS cocktail (combination therapy):

Q: Can I still drink alcohol when I am taking this medicine?

A: Any amount of alcohol will change the way the medicine will react in your body. The more alcohol you drink, the less likely the medicine will work.

Q: Should I still take my medication if I have been drinking?

A: Yes, although the medicine will not work as well because of the alcohol. It is important to keep a steady amount of the medicine in your body at all times.

Q: What happens if I vomit (throw up) after I take my medicine?

A: If you vomit within an hour after taking your pills, they will not have had a chance to get into your body, so take another dose. If you vomit after more than one hour after taking your pills, do not take another dose.

Credits

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This is one of a series of information updates for Inuit community members to learn more about the medicines and other kinds of treatments some people with HIV/AIDS use to fight HIV and AIDS. If you have questions or want more information, talk to your doctor, nurse or CHR.

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