

Self Care Series: Book Two



**LIVING WITH HOPE
AND
STAYING HEALTHY**

For People Living with HIV

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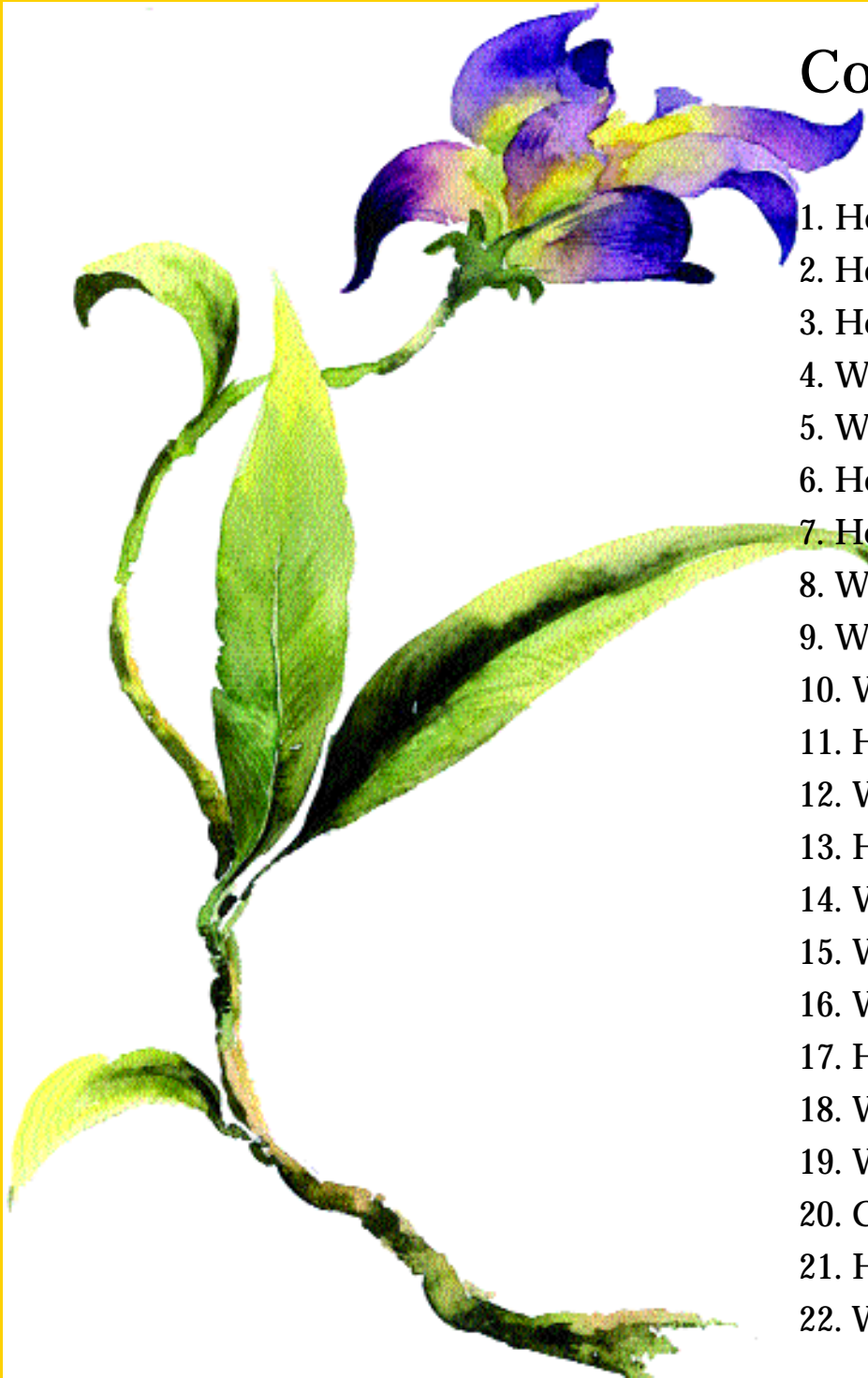
This book is for people
living with HIV.

It contains information about how
to stay hopeful and healthy,
and to manage common health
problems.

**HIV+ people do have a
future.**

**It can be lived well.
You can enjoy many happy
years with your family and
friends.**

**Plan for your future with
those you love.**



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HOW SHOULD I PLAN FOR THE FUTURE?

You have taken an important step by testing for HIV. The test results show that you have HIV. Now it is time to plan for your future.

What should I plan?

- Plan how you can continue to work.
 - * Do you need to take more rest?
 - * Do you need to change the type of job you do?
- Find out what services are available in your community.
- Find out who can support you with health advice.
- Identify who can help answer questions you may have about living with HIV.

What practical things can I do?

- Go to qualified medical staff when ill. Do not waste money buying medicine without medical advice.
- Be careful about your land and other assets. They are important for your family's future.



It is time to plan for your future.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Keep hopeful

What can I hope for?

- Hope that you will live a long time.
- Hope that each infection will be treated as it comes.
- Hope that you will be loved and respected.
- Hope that scientists will keep finding new ways to fight HIV/AIDS.
- Hope that the future will be good for your family.

More things to plan:

- Plan how to enjoy and make the most of each day.
- Find new ways for you and your family to generate income.

More practical things to do:

- Spend money on food to keep you healthy and strong.
- Share your fears and hopes for the future. Discuss with family and friends what you would like to happen.

Some people after learning that they are HIV+ have changed their lives to do things which are valuable for themselves and their community.

There is no need to worry about the past or the future.

The secret of happiness is to be entirely present with what is in front of you, to live fully in the present moment. You can't go back and reshape the past.

It's gone!

You can't dictate the future. So there is no need to worry.

A quote from Buddhist teaching by Venerable Maha Ghosananda

HOW CAN I COPE WITH STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION?

HIV/AIDS is a new disease. Some people are afraid because they do not understand it. They may discriminate against people who have HIV. This makes it difficult for people with HIV to talk about HIV and seek help.

Useful things:

1. Know that you did not do anything wrong. You have a chronic disease that you can live with.
2. Learn about HIV/AIDS so you can explain to others.
3. Live and work as normal. Show that you can contribute something to your community.



Stigma is a common reaction to disease. Many diseases have carried stigma in the past including STIs, leprosy, TB, cancer and mental illnesses.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Other ways to cope with discrimination:

Explain to others that HIV is a chronic disease that can affect anyone—rich and poor, men, women and children.

Form or join a local support group for HIV+ people. Support groups help people to change stigma and discrimination. They also help provide information and reduce family members' fears.

HOW CAN I MANAGE STRESS AND WORRY?

Stress and worry is part of everybody's life. When you have a chronic illness such as HIV it is normal that you will have times of stress. You can learn to cope.

- Learn as much as you can about HIV. You will be able to manage better if you understand your illness.
- Go to a qualified medical person you trust when you need medical care.



Talk with others who are HIV+.
People who are HIV+ have similar worries and questions. If you hide your problem other people cannot help you.



Do not isolate yourself

Seek help from a person who knows how to treat depression:

- If you are depressed for more than two weeks.
- If you have trouble sleeping.
- If you do not feel hungry.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Feelings of sadness, anger and fear are normal. They will come and go.

Other things that might help:

- Exercising or working can help reduce anger.
- Raising animals or growing something can give you hope.
- Enjoying activities with family or friends will make you feel happy.
- Going to the temple, wat, church or mosque.
- Meditating.
- Continuing to work. Loss of income is stressful.

AVOID:

- Smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. They can further weaken your health.
- Drugs such as 'Ya Ba' and 'Ya Ma'. They damage your health.
- Isolating yourself.

WHAT CAN I DO TO FEEL CALM?

Meditate like this:

“May I be happy. May I be peaceful. May I be free from anger. May I be free from suffering.”

Why must we love ourselves first?

Because peace begins with individuals. It is only by loving ourselves first that we are able to extend love to others. Charity begins at home.

By protecting ourselves, we protect the whole world. By loving ourselves, we love the whole world. When we say, “May I be happy,” we are speaking for everyone. The whole world is one. Life is one. We are all of the same Buddha nature.

Maha Ghosananda



May I be happy. May I be peaceful. May I be free from anger. May I be free from suffering.

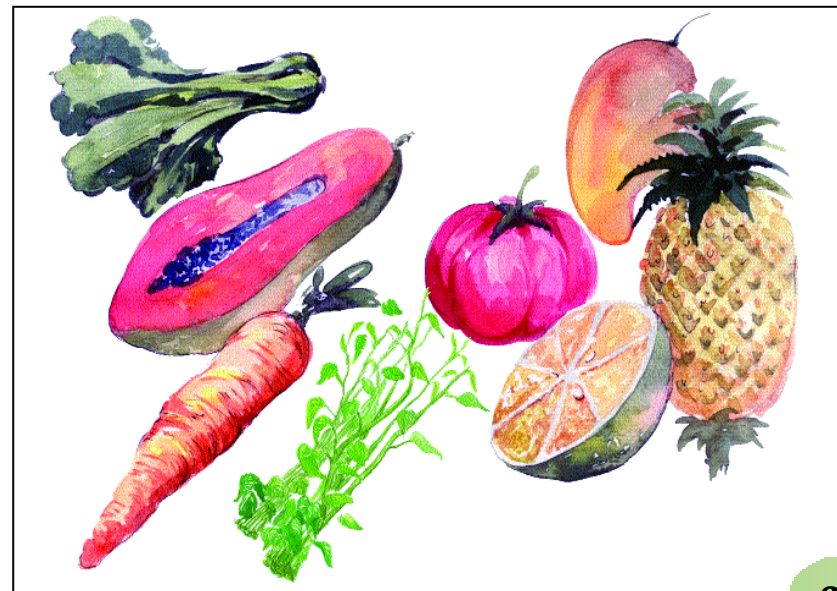
WHAT SHOULD I EAT TO STAY HEALTHY?

Try to eat 3 meals a day. Eat foods from each of the food groups below. Eating nutritious food can help you stay healthy and strengthen your body's protective system.



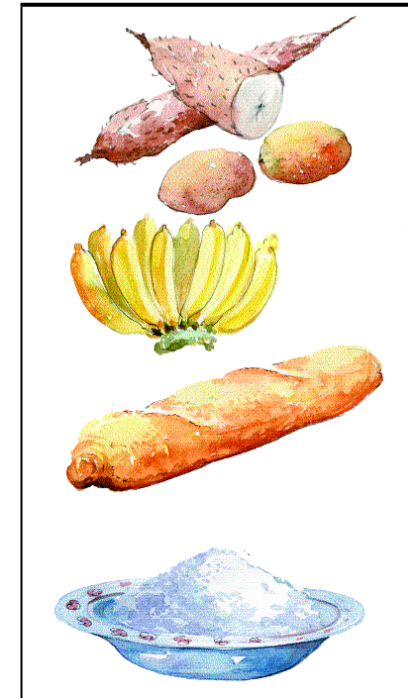
1. GROW FOODS

Grow foods include all kinds of meat, fish, eggs, and some kinds of beans, especially soy beans.



2. GLOW FOODS

Glow foods have vitamins to help the body work well. Most fruits and vegetables contain vitamins. Dark green leaves contain many kinds of vitamins.



3. GO FOODS

Go foods provide energy. Rice, sugar, bread, and all foods made from these things are go foods. Fats are also go foods. Adding fat or oil to rice or food is an easy way to add energy.

EXTRA INFORMATION

What can I do if I cannot afford to buy food?

Food does not need to be expensive to be nutritious.
Food from the field or forest is also nutritious. Avoid buying
cigarettes or alcohol. Use the money to buy nutritious food.

A good diet is food from the three food groups, that you can easily
obtain in your community and that you can afford.

**If you want to take vitamins do not waste money on injectable vitamins.
They are the same as vitamin tablets but are more expensive.**

HOW DO I MAKE SURE MY FOOD IS SAFE?

When you are HIV+ your body's protective system is weakened. Germs can easily enter your body. Avoid getting diseases which come from unclean food and from drinking dirty water.

1. Wash your hands before preparing food and before eating.
2. Wash all fruit and vegetables well.
3. Cook all food thoroughly. Heat destroys germs in food.
4. Do not let flies touch your food.
5. Always re-heat leftover food before eating. Leftover food can grow germs that cause diarrhea.
6. Drink clean water.



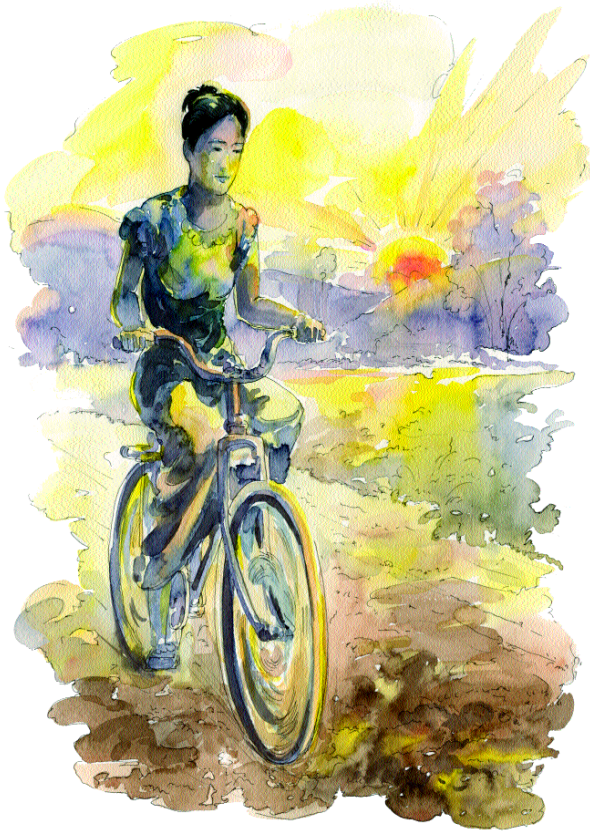
Avoid getting diseases which come from unclean food and dirty water.

HOW CAN I KEEP MY BODY AND MIND STRONG?

Your body and mind need both exercise and rest to stay strong.

Exercise can improve your appetite and can strengthen your muscles. It can reduce stress and increase your energy.

You may get enough exercise from your daily work. Walking, chopping wood, carrying water, etc., is all exercise.



Exercise calms the mind and keeps the body strong.



Rest helps your body and mind.

If your body gets too tired, it cannot work well.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO STAY HEALTHY?

Protect your skin

- Keep your skin clean by bathing daily.
- If there is severe itching or many lesions, seek medical care.
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants to protect against mosquitoes.
- Use a mosquito net while sleeping.

Practice good hygiene

- Use a latrine or a place far from the house.
- Wash your hands after using the latrine and before eating.



Wash clothing daily and dry it in the sun



Keep your skin clean by bathing daily

EXTRA INFORMATION

Other things you can do to protect your skin:

- Avoid injuring the skin and keep wounds clean and covered.
- If the skin is dry, use body lotion to moisten it.
- Avoid using soap on dry skin.
- Observe what food causes you to have an allergic reaction and avoid it.
- Reduce beer consumption, as beer is known to cause skin problems.

Prevent diseases from dirty water by:

- Drinking clean water. If your water does not come from a safe source, boil it before drinking.

Keep your home clean.

- Sweep the house.
- Keep animals outside of the house.

WHAT ARE OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS?

Opportunistic infections (OIs) are illnesses caused by germs that take advantage of the body's weakened protective system. There are many OI's. Some common ones are TB, diarrhea, brain and chest infections. Not everyone with HIV gets the same OI's.

How can I prevent opportunistic infections?

Some drugs prevent opportunistic infections. The most common drug used is cotri-moxazole (Bactrim). You must take 2 tablets daily for the rest of your life. Ask advice from a qualified medical person about this and other drugs.



Ask advice from a qualified medical person about the drugs to prevent opportunistic infections.



Seek prompt treatment from a qualified medical person if you have an infection. Opportunistic infections are treatable and you can be well again.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Can I buy medicines to treat myself for illness?

Go to a qualified medical person when you do not feel well. Try to find a medical person who has learned about treatment of HIV/AIDS. Do not buy medications to treat yourself. You may waste money and make your condition worse.

Important:

Some medicines such as cortisone and hydrocortisone are very dangerous if you have HIV. They suppress the body's protective system which is already weakened.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FEEL SICK?



If you feel sick, it is important to get early correct treatment from a qualified medical person.



Health center staff have special information for treating people with HIV/AIDS. National policy says government hospitals must provide free care for those who are poor.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Tell the health staff:

- What your symptoms are and when they started
- The medicines you are taking
- Consider telling the doctor or health staff that you are HIV+. They need this information to provide correct treatment.

When receiving treatment you should ask:

- The name of your problem or illness
- The name of any medicines prescribed and how/when to take them
- When you need to return

HOW CAN I MANAGE DIARRHEA?

Diarrhea is more than 3 watery stools in 1 day. It can be caused by:

- An infection from food or water
- Stress and worry
- The body's weakened protective system

When you have diarrhea:

- Drink plenty of liquids such as water, ORS, coconut juice and tea.
- Eat soft cooked food such as rice soup.
- If you have pain, put a bottle of warm water wrapped in a "krama" or towel on your stomach.
- Keep clean. After each episode of diarrhea wash and dry the rectal area gently.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.



Drink plenty of liquids such as water, ORS, coconut juice and tea.

Seek treatment from the health center or another trained person if:

- You do not get better within 4 days.
- You have diarrhea and also fever.
- There is blood or mucous in the diarrhea and you have abdominal pain.
- You feel weak.
- You have severe abdominal pain.
- You vomit and cannot eat.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Treatment of diarrhea

Government guidelines recommend treating diarrhea with cotrimoxazole and metronidazole. It is important to take the correct dose for the correct number of days as advised by the health staff.

HIV can cause chronic diarrhea. If the diarrhea continues after the correct treatment, you can take constipating drugs to control the diarrhea. These drugs include loperamide and smecta.

Traditional medicine for diarrhea:

Guava (*Psidium guajava*)

- Take unripe fruit, or 15 - 20 leaves of guava and boil in water, then mix with ginger and drink.

Milk Fruit

- Take the skin or leaves of the milk fruit and put in the sun until dry, then boil in water and drink.

Pomegranate shoots

- Take the pomegranate shoots and chew, followed by drinking boiled water.

Cyperus Rotundus

- Take large roots of the plant, heat slightly in a saucepan and then expose to the air until dry. When dry pound until powder, mix with water and drink.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR A SORE MOUTH OR THROAT?

Thrush is a common cause of a sore mouth. It looks like a white coating on the tongue and in the mouth and throat.


How to treat thrush:

- Clean the mouth and tongue often with a soft toothbrush.
Rinse with a salt and water solution.
- Suck ice or drink cold drinks to numb the pain. Drink plenty of water.
- Eat soft foods.

Mouth ulcers are also common. They occur on the lips, gums, tongue or roof of the mouth. Take paracetamol for pain relief. Clean the mouth and tongue often with a soft toothbrush.



Seek treatment from health center staff if:

-  You are unable to swallow food or water.
- You have a severe sore throat.

For treating thrush chew two cloves of garlic every 4 hours or suck lemon twice a day.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Avoid sweet foods, they increase soreness and encourage thrush to grow. Drink through a straw to help to avoid pain when drinking.

Drugs to treat thrush include:

- Gentian violet - apply to your tongue and mouth 2 times a day.
- Nystatin ovules or tablets – suck 2 times a day.
- Ketoconazole, fluconazole & other anti-fungal tablets or lozenges.

**Taking antibiotics can make thrush worse.
Do not take them unless advised by medical staff.**

Traditional medicine for a sore mouth and throat

Chambebitter (*Phyllanthus urinaria*)

- Take the whole plant and pound until fine particles, mix with salt and apply to affected areas of the mouth.

Chinese date (*Zizyphus mauritiana*)

- Take the skin of the Chinese date and boil in water until soft, then suck slowly in mouth.

HOW CAN I CARE FOR SKIN PROBLEMS?

To prevent skin problems:

- Keep your skin clean with soap and water.
- Dry well after washing.
- Keep your finger nails clean and short.
- Avoid scratching.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables to keep your skin healthy.
- Take chlorpheniramine for allergic/itchy skin problems.



Some treatments for skin problems.



Keep your skin clean with soap and water.

Seek treatment from health center staff or a qualified medical person if:

- The affected area is red and swollen and you have a fever.
- There are many wounds or abscesses.
- The affected area smells bad or bleeds or becomes black.
- Your face is affected.
- A rash appears on your face or limbs after taking antibiotics.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Caring for painful rash/small blisters

- Keep the area dry.
- Wear clean loose fitting clothes.
- Take aspirin or paracetamol for pain.
- Prevent infection by cleaning sores with clean salt water 3-4 times per day.
- Apply gentian violet once per day.
- Apply calamine lotion to treat itching.

Treating scabies

Treat as soon as possible. If one of the family have scabies the whole family should be treated, even if they do not have an itchy rash.

- Wash your whole body with soap and water.
- Using a small piece of cloth or compress apply Benzyl Benzoate from the neck down to the toes.
Do not put on face. Leave on the body overnight and wear clean clothes.
- Next morning do not shower. Reapply Benzyl Benzoate from neck to toes.
- Do the same thing again in the evening.
- On the second morning shower and put on clean clothes.
- Wash clothes, bed clothes and blankets with soap and water.
Dry in the hot sun. This will kill the scabies insects.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Treat diseases early. Go to a qualified medical person. This will prevent the disease from getting worse.

How to treat ring worm and other fungal skin infections

- Apply anti-fungal creams such as Whitfields Ointment to the affected area.
- Traditional treatment may also help.

How to treat skin lesions or cuts

- Keep them clean. Wash with soap and water.
- Gentian violet is good for small infections.
- If the area gets red, swollen and painful, get medical treatment.

How to treat itchy rashes

- Apply a clean wet towel or “krama” to reduce itching.
- If the skin is dry avoid using soap or detergents.
- Apply Vaseline (petroleum jelly) or calamine lotion 2-3 times per day.
- Try traditional treatments.

Traditional medicine for skin problems

Treatment for ring worm

Candle bush (Cassia alata)

- Take fresh leaves of the candle bush and pound until fine, then place over the affected part of the skin.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR NAUSEA AND VOMITING?

Nausea and vomiting are common in HIV+ people. Try to find out what is causing the problem. **They could be caused by many different things including:**

- Reaction to medicines
- Stomach ulcers
- Food poisoning
- Stress and anxiety

Things that might help:

- Apply a cold compress to your forehead.
- Take medicine to stop nausea, e.g. 1 tablet of Dimenhydrinate, whenever symptoms occur.
- Avoid eating while lying down.
- Eat small frequent meals.
- Wait 1-2 hours after vomiting has stopped before taking foods. Start slowly with fluids first.
- Clean your mouth regularly with warm salt water solution to remove bad taste.



Nausea and vomiting are common in HIV+ people.

Seek treatment from health center staff or a qualified practitioner if:

- **You have a lot of vomiting and are unable to eat.**
- **Your mouth is very dry or you feel very weak.**
- **You have fever with vomiting.**
- **Vomit is mixed with blood.**

EXTRA INFORMATION

Traditional medicine for nausea and vomiting

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)

- Take the fresh or dry roots of ginger and boil in water and drink. Alternately pound until powder and mix with water and drink.

Jiplu (*Piper lotot*)

- Take the whole plant including the flowers, put in the sun until dry and then boil in water and drink.

WHAT SHOULD I DO FOR A COUGH?

A cough can be caused by:

- A common cold
- Asthma
- A lung infection
- Tuberculosis
- Smoking

Prevent colds and cough by:

- Eating well
- Getting enough rest and exercise
- Avoiding smoking
- Avoiding people who have coughs and colds

Go to a qualified medical person immediately if:

- You have a cough for more than three weeks.
- You have high fever with cough.
- You have bloody sputum.
- You have chest pain and difficulty breathing.



**If you have a cough,
always cover your mouth
when coughing.
Do not spit on the floor.**

How can I relieve a cough?

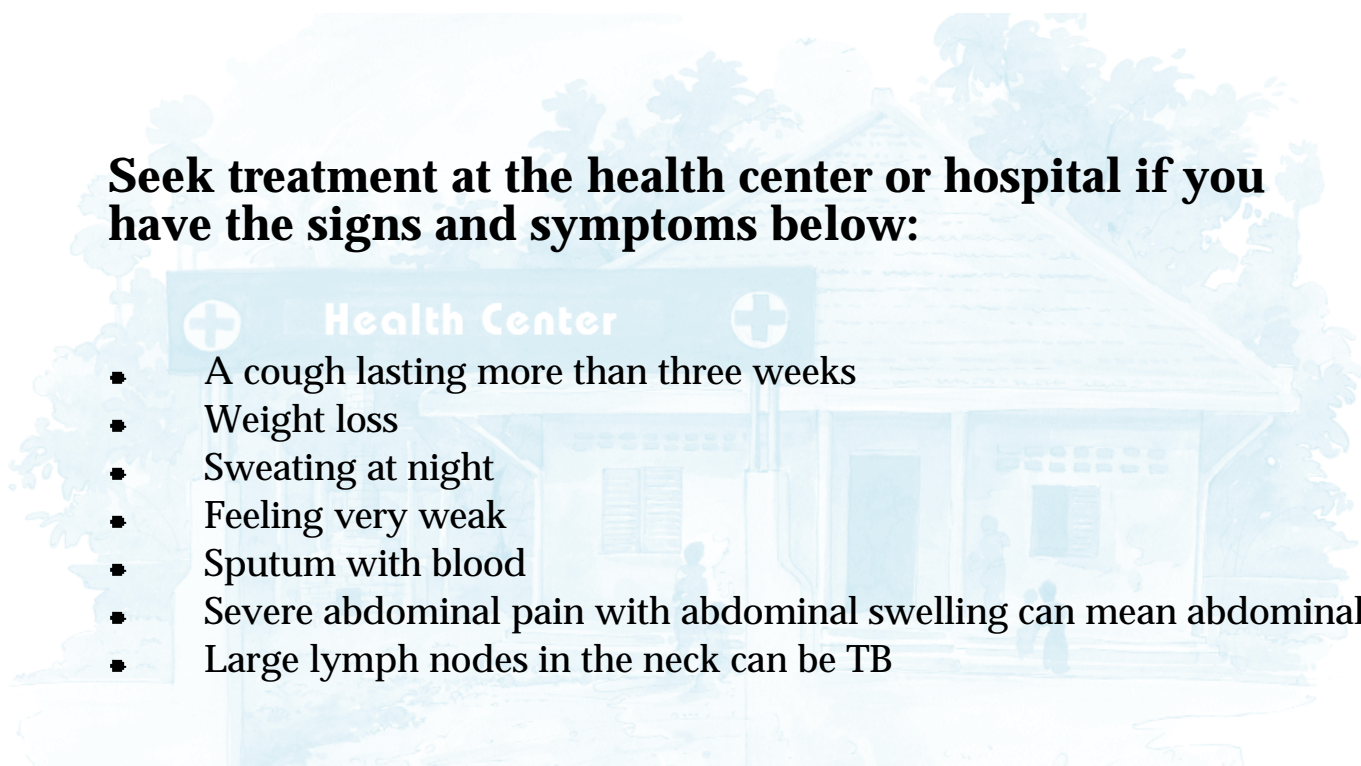
- Drink plenty of water.
- Try lemon juice mixed with salt, or warm tea with sugar.
- If you can get honey, mix it with sugar and lemon and warm water. It will soothe the throat.
- Try some traditional cures.

WHAT CAN I DO IF MY COUGH DOES NOT GET BETTER?

If your cough lasts for more than 3 weeks, it may mean you have Tuberculosis (TB).

TB is a common infection if you have HIV. TB can occur in many places besides the lungs. If you have TB, it can be treated.

Seek treatment at the health center or hospital if you have the signs and symptoms below:

- 
- A cough lasting more than three weeks
 - Weight loss
 - Sweating at night
 - Feeling very weak
 - Sputum with blood
 - Severe abdominal pain with abdominal swelling can mean abdominal TB
 - Large lymph nodes in the neck can be TB

TB treatment always uses more than one medicine and takes months to cure.

- Treatment for TB is free.
- For the first 2 months of treatment, TB medicines need to be taken either as an inpatient or as an outpatient on a supervised daily basis.
- For a further 6 months, TB treatment can be taken at home.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Treating TB incorrectly is dangerous to you and to others because:

- If TB medicine is not taken in the correct dose, at the right time and for the correct number of months, your TB infection will not be cured.
- If medicines are not taken correctly, the TB germs will become resistant to the TB medicine.
- Your TB infection can be spread to other people such as your young children. TB medicine will not be effective against this new resistant TB infection.

Traditional medicine for a cough

Rosary Pea (*Abrus precatorius*)

- Take the roots and fresh leaves, dry in the sun and then boil with water and drink.

HOW CAN I SLEEP WELL?

- Rest as much as possible.
- Take a nap during the day.
- Try traditional medicine for sleeping.
- Increase the amount of food you eat.
Eat small amounts often.
- Take multivitamins or Vitamin B complex to increase your appetite.
- Gentle exercise such as walking can help you to relax and sleep.



Seek medical help if:

Health Center

- You continually feel tired and weak.
- You are not able to sleep for several days.

Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation to help you sleep.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Anemia is a common cause of tiredness when you have HIV.

How can I prevent anemia ?

- Take iron and folic acid tablets. You can get them from the health centre.
- Eat foods rich in iron such as liver, chicken or pig's blood, green leafy vegetables and eggs.

Traditional medicine for loss of energy and tiredness

Chinese date, jujube (*Zizyphus mauritiana*)

- Take unripe fruit, boil in water and drink.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I HAVE A FEVER?

On and off fever is common when you have HIV. Fever is not a disease but is a symptom, it might mean that you have an infection.

How can I treat fever?

- Remove extra clothing
- Wash the body with cool (not very cold) water
- Drink plenty of water and any other fluids
- Take paracetamol, one to two tablets every 4-6 hours
- Rest

Seek treatment from health center staff or a qualified medical person if you have:

- Fever that does not go down after 3 days
- Cough and weight loss with fever
- Fever with a very dry mouth
- Fever with a severe headache and stiff neck
- Fever with a convulsion
- Fever with vomiting or diarrhea



On and off fever is common when you have HIV.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Traditional medicine for fever

Indian penny wort (*Centella asiatica*)

- Take the plant and leaves (fresh or dry). Pound until the juice comes out. Alternately boil in water and drink the water.

Borapet (*Tinospora crispa*)

- Pound the stems until fine powder or soak in alcohol and drink twice per day until better.

Wild bitter melon (*Momordica charantia*)

- Take unripe fruit and use like a vegetable, boil and then eat. Alternately boil and use the water to wash in.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR A HEADACHE?

If the headache is mild, you can take:

- Paracetamol – take one 500 mg tablet 3-4 times a day, or
- Aspirin – take one 500 mg tablet 3-4 times a day.

(Do not take aspirin if you have a history of stomach pain or stomach ulcer.)

Other things that might help:

- Cold ice packs or tiger balm applied to the head and forehead.
- A gentle massage by a friend or relative.
- Traditional treatments for headaches.



Cold ice packs or tiger balm applied to the head and forehead may help relieve a headache.

Go for treatment to a qualified medical person immediately if you have any of these signs with a headache:

- **Persistent vomiting**
- **Confusion**
- **Very severe headache that is getting worse**
- **Fever accompanied by headache**
- **Stiff neck and fever with headache**

EXTRA INFORMATION

Traditional medicine for headache

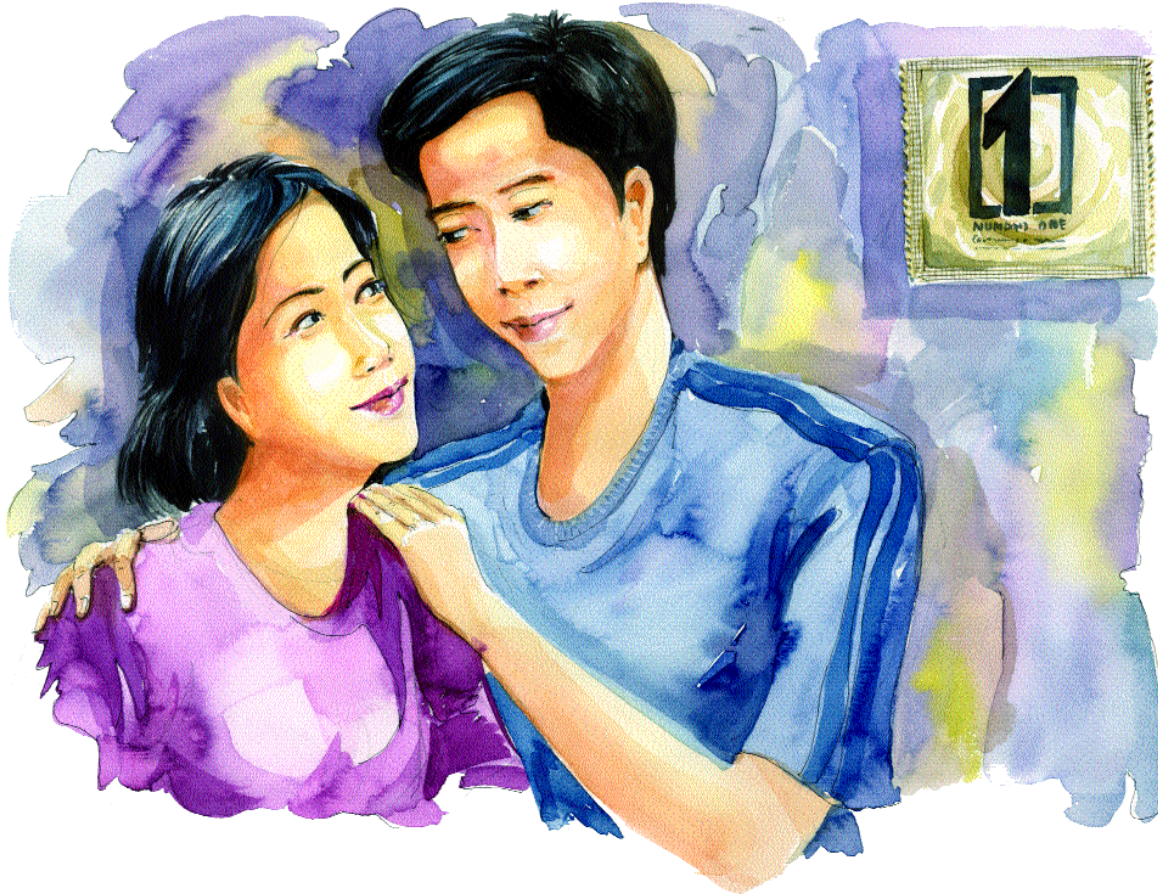
Pomelo (*Citrus grandis*)

- Clean the leaves of a fresh pomelo and mix with the leaves of any other plant. Boil the leaves in water until the water is boiling. Take the warm water to make a steam inhalation by placing the water in a bowl, put head over steaming water and cover head with a towel.

Mentus arvenis

- Take the whole plant except the roots. Spread out in a shady area until dry. Then boil and drink the water.

CAN I HAVE SEX WHEN I AM HIV+?



Do I need to use a condom if my partner is also HIV+ ?

You must use a condom even if you and your partner are both HIV+. Condoms will protect both of you from new STI infections or more HIV virus.

People who are HIV+ can still enjoy their sex life. But it is important to use a condom for sex. This means wearing a condom for vaginal, oral and anal sex .

EXTRA INFORMATION

Other safe ways to get sexual pleasure:

- Slow and sensual massage
- Kissing
- Cuddling and words of love
- Masturbation - holding or stroking your partner when he or she masturbates

Safer sex includes:

1. Staying in a mutual faithful relationship with the same partner.
2. Using a condom for all types of sexual intercourse including vaginal, anal and oral sex.
3. Using a condom even when your partner is also HIV+.

HOW CAN I CARE FOR GENITAL PROBLEMS?

STIs and infections of the genital area often cause pain and discomfort which may include:

- An abnormal discharge from the penis or vagina
- Warts, sores or blisters in the genital area or around the anus
- Swollen glands in the groin
- Itchiness or rash in the groin
- Frequency or pain in passing urine
- Back pain

If you have any of the above symptoms, go to a qualified medical person for treatment.

IMPORTANT: Always use a condom for sex.



Thrush is common in HIV+ people. To treat thrush, paint inside the vaginal area and vulva or foreskin with gentian violet once a day for 3 days or until better .

EXTRA INFORMATION

Signs of genital thrush

Thrush is not a sexually transmitted disease, but is common in HIV+ people. In women, thrush causes a thick white curd discharge and severe itching in the genital area. In HIV+ men, the foreskin and the area underneath it become very red and sore. Taking antibiotics can increase the risk of getting thrush.

How to treat thrush

- Wash the genital area in cool water, do not use soap.
- Wear loose cotton underwear. Avoid nylon underwear.
- Paint inside the vaginal area and vulva or foreskin with gentian violet once a day for 3 days or until better.
- Nystatin pessaries can also be inserted into the vagina nightly for 7 days or until better.
- Men can soak the penis in a diluted salt and water solution. (Dissolve a teaspoon of salt in a glass of water or in a similar small container. Pull back the foreskin, put the penis in the water and soak for 5 minutes.)

If not better within 4 days, seek help from a qualified health worker.

WHAT ARE ANTI-RETROVIRALS?



If you want to start anti-retrovirals:

- Think about how much money you will need. Anti-retrovirals have to be taken for the rest of your life. It will be expensive.
- Go to a qualified medical person who is experienced with anti-retroviral drugs. It is dangerous to buy anti-retroviral drugs in a pharmacy.
- Be sure you understand how anti-retrovirals work. They slow down the rate of increase of HIV virus in your body, they do not destroy the HIV virus.
- Anti-retrovirals can have severe side effects.

Anti-retroviral drugs are a treatment for HIV or AIDS. They are not a cure. They may slow down the onset of AIDS. The treatment is very expensive. Anti-retroviral drugs have to be taken every day for the rest of a person's life.

EXTRA INFORMATION

How do anti-retrovirals work?

HIV is a very small germ called a virus. Anti-retroviral drugs work by slowing down the increase of HIV virus in the body. For anti-retrovirals to work well for a long time, an HIV+ person needs to take more than one type of anti-retroviral at a time. Anti-retroviral combinations also have to be changed often. It is important to receive regular follow-up from a qualified medical person who is experienced with using anti-retrovirals. Some Cambodian call anti-retrovirals “life prolonging medicines.”

What problems can occur when taking anti-retrovirals?

1. Drug Resistance

Anti-retrovirals slow the increase of HIV virus in the body. They cannot stop the HIV virus completely. Some HIV is able to survive. This HIV is called “drug resistant HIV,” and will increase even when you are taking the anti-retrovirals.

When someone has drug resistance, the amount of virus in the blood increases and the person is more at risk of becoming ill with other infections. Taking drugs exactly as prescribed is very important. Missing doses or not taking them on time lowers the amount of drug in the blood and the virus can become stronger.

2. Side Effects

Side effects are when the drug affects the body in ways that are not planned. Most anti-retrovirals have side effects. Some people only have mild side effects. In some people the side effects occur so strongly that they have to stop taking the anti-retrovirals.



Health Center



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