

# POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Health and Wellness Information for Members

Spring 2012



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P.O. Box 46160 Los Angeles, CA 90046

Member Services Mon - Fri, 8:00am to 8:00pm Tel (800) 263-0067 TTY/TDD: 711

## Kick the Habit

There are many dangers when people with HIV smoke. It makes your immune system weak and less able to fight infections. Health problems like cancers, heart disease, lung disease, strokes and oral health problems are all linked to smoking.

### When you Quit

Nicotine is the drug in tobacco that your body craves. You will have nicotine withdrawal symptoms when you quit. These can make you angry, depressed, anxious or moody. These symptoms will go away as the nicotine leaves your system.

Smoking is a habit. Your mind connects it to certain times of day or things you do. You need to relearn how to do these things without smoking. You should drink lots of water, get plenty of rest and avoid places and things that make you want to smoke. It helps to start a healthy habit like walking or other exercise. This can also prevent weight gain.

#### Ways to Quit

Half the battle is won when you decide you no longer want to smoke. There are many ways to quit.

- Cold turkey. This is when you stop and never pick it up again.
- Nicotine gum, throat drops or patches give a small dose of nicotine to help control the withdrawal symptoms. You use less and less of them over time.
- Your doctor can prescribe drugs that make you crave tobacco less.
- Support groups can keep you on the right path.



It can be very hard to quit, but you can do it! You will look and feel better. You can live a longer, richer life. If it did not work to quit in the past, you can still try again. Keep trying until tobacco is no longer a part of who you are. Choosing to live a healthy life is the best thing you can do for yourself.

Call the National Smoking Quitline at: (877) 448-7848 or visit www.smokefree.gov to learn more.

## POSITIVE OUTLOOK Spring 2012

## **Coping with Anxiety**

Anxiety is when you feel worried, threatened or afraid. It is normal to worry about things that are stressful. Anxiety becomes a problem if it makes you change the things you do or how you live.

#### What are anxiety disorders?

For some people anxiety gets in the way of normal life. This is a problem called an anxiety disorder. You may feel changes in your body:

- Fast heartbeat or chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Dizzy or shaky
- Break out in a rash
- Sweats and chills
- Flashbacks or nightmares

When you are anxious, you might feel nervous or like something bad will happen. Things you enjoy, like food, sleep, or sex may not sound good to you.

### What can you do?

There are things you can do to help prevent anxiety:

- Stay active
- Get good sleep
- Meditate
- Avoid caffeine. Do not drink coffee, tea or soda.
- Do not use alcohol and street drugs to cope

A trained person can talk through fears and worries with you. Tell your doctor or RN Case Manager if you feel worried or anxious.



## Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a group of diseases of the eye. It is one of the main causes of blindness. Pressure builds slowly when fluid does not drain from your eye. This can damage the optic nerve, the main nerve in the eye.

Often there are no symptoms of glaucoma. Sometimes you start to lose vision out of the corners of your eyes. There is no cure, but it can be treated to prevent blindness.

It is best when treated early. People over 40 should have an eye exam every two years. You should get tested before 40 if others in your family have had glaucoma, or you have diabetes. Certain races are at higher risk. You should get tested before 40 if you are Black. An eye doctor will test for this disease. Ask your doctor to refer you for an eye exam. Make sure you keep the visit.



## Prevention Points

### Prevention is key to a healthy life. Be sure to:

- ✓ Stay in touch with your doctor and RN Case Manager
- $\checkmark$  Get labs to check your viral load and CD4 count often
- ✓ Take your HIV medications daily
- ✓ Talk to your doctor about an Advance Directive Form (Five Wishes Guide)
- ✓ Talk to your doctor about tests to check for colon and rectal cancer
- ✓ Get an anal pap test each year
- ✓ Get a pap test of the cervix (women only)
- ✓ Work out 30 to 60 minutes, 5 days a week
- ✓ Eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables daily
- ✓ Practice safer sex
- ✓ Stop smoking
- ✓ Limit alcohol use
- ✓ Stop illegal drug use
- $\checkmark$  See friends and be social for mental health and well-being

## Oral Health and HIV

A healthy mouth is a sign of a healthy body. Problems with your teeth, gums, tongue or throat are common with HIV. When you make time to take care of your mouth, it can prevent a lot of problems later.



To help protect your teeth and mouth, you can:

- Brush your teeth after meals with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss gently between teeth.
- Visit a dentist to check and clean your teeth every 6 months.
- See a dentist as soon as you can if you have sores in your mouth.
- Do not use crystal meth. This drug destroys your teeth and gums.

#### **Common Problems**

There are a few issues that people with HIV have more often. Many limit what you can eat or drink. Some can be very painful.

- Dry mouth is a lack of fluid in your mouth. This can be from HIV or HIV drugs. It can damage your teeth and gums and cause cavities. You can sip water, eat sugar-free candy, or use a rinse to wet your mouth.
- Thrush is caused by a yeast or fungus. There are painful white patches in your mouth, on your tongue, or on your lips.
- A virus can cause cold sores or warts in or around your mouth. Canker sores can be larger and last longer in people with HIV.
- Hairy leukoplakia causes white spots that look hairy. These cannot be wiped away. This happens most in people with low CD4 counts.
- Kaposi sarcoma is a cancer that shows up as dark patches in the mouth.

## **HIV and Oral Health**

When you have sores in your mouth, you are more likely to pick up other germs and infections. Always practice safer sex and use condoms or dental dams for oral sex. You can avoid some dental problems when you take your HIV drugs in the right way every day. Visit a dentist every six months. They may find things you cannot see.

Your Health Plan may not include dental services. Dental schools and HIV/AIDS service groups sometimes have clinics where you only pay what you can afford. Check with your RN Case Manager to see what is offered in your area.

## **Know Your Numbers**

Your **CD4 Count** and **Viral Load** lab test results help you to manage your HIV. These numbers tell you and your doctor how well your body responds to HIV treatment. A blood test every few months helps keep your health on the right track.

**CD4 Count** measures how many T-Cells are in your blood. The higher your T-Cell count is, the better your immune system works.

**Viral Load** measures how much HIV is in your blood. The lower your viral load is, the better it is for your health.

### Take charge of your health

- See your doctor for a check-up every 3 or 4 months.
- Keep track of your viral load and CD4 count over time.
- Ask for copies of your labs. Your nurse can print older test results.
- Take your HIV drugs every day as prescribed.

#### Your numbers count

- The goal is to have a high CD4 count that is as high as possible. It should be at least 350. This means your immune system is strong and can fight HIV.
- You want a viral load so low that the test does not pick it up. Less than 20 copies are called an **undetectable** viral load.

Track your CD4 count and viral load online! These websites let you print graphs and see your results over time:

- POZ/ Graph My Labs: www.aidsmeds.com/graphs/
- The Body: https://secure.thebody.com/ tracker/intro.html

## Think About Joining a Trial!

New drug trials and treatment studies start all the time. These help develop better treatment for all people with HIV and AIDS. There are many types of clinical trials. One may be perfect for you. Your doctor may ask you to join a clinical trial. Think about it!

**For more info call:** (323) 913-1033



## Language Line Services

Tell your doctor or RN Case Manager if English is not the language you speak. They can call an interpreter who speaks your language. For your health, it is vital to make sure you and your doctor understand each other. This service is free to you.

## A Message from Your Health Plan

## **Your Contact Information**

Positive Healthcare California cares about you and your health. We need to know if you moved or got a new phone number in the past year. Please call Member Services to update your record.

#### **Member Services**

Monday-Friday 8:00am-8:00pm Tel: (800) 263-0067 TTY/TTD: 711

#### **Medication Therapy Management Program (MTMP)**

As part of Positive Healthcare California, you are enrolled in the MTMP. This Program helps people who take many prescription drugs. The Program lowers the chance of medication mistakes and reactions. Your health care team will be in touch with you and your doctor. They will explain the drugs that you take. Your doctor will know of safety issues with the medications. Any other health issues will also be handled.

#### **Compliance Hotline**

Help us look out for Medi-Cal fraud and abuse. For example, if your Explanation of Benefits lists charges that are wrong, call Member Services. Call our Compliance Hotline if you suspect possible fraud or abuse.

**Compliance Hotline:** (800) AIDS-HIV • (800) 243-7448

## We want to hear from you!

The Client Advisory Committee is a great way to tell us what you think about your Health Plan! We welcome all Positive Healthcare members and AHF Healthcare Center clients. You can share your questions, concerns and comments with our Health Plan leaders. We use your concerns to make the Plan better. Come to the next meeting to find out what Positive Healthcare can do for you!

### California - Los Angeles

Tues, March 27, 2012 6:00pm – 7:00pm Tues, May 29, 2012 6:00pm – 7:00pm 6255 W. Sunset Blvd, 21st Floor To RSVP, **call Santiago at (800) 243-2101** 

Food and drinks will be served.

## Questions?

**Contact Your RN Case Manager** Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5:30pm Tel: (800) 474-1434

After-Hours Nurse Advice & Urgent Calls Mon-Fri, 5:30pm-8:30am and 24 hours on Weekends Tel: (800) 797-1717