



Facial Wasting (Lipoatrophy)

Facial wasting (lipoatrophy) is the loss of fat under the skin. It makes the face look thin. It makes wrinkles or folds in the skin stand out. HIV or HIV meds can cause it. Facial wasting itself is not a danger.

You need fat for your health. It helps your immune system do its job. You need it to process the food you eat.

Symptoms

Without fat under the skin, people look older, tired or unwell. The eyes, cheeks and forehead look sunken.

Wasting in the face can make a person:

- Have poor self-esteem
- Not want to be social
- Lose interest in sex
- Not want to take HIV meds
- Depressed

Causes

This problem can be caused by some HIV meds. The fat cells are damaged and no longer work as they should. Other causes include: HIV, age and genes.

Risk Factors

Four things may increase wasting:

- Certain class of HIV meds
- Age older than 40
- Fatty acids in your blood
- Low CD4 count when you start HIV treatment

How to Know You Have Facial Wasting

You should know that the symptoms of lipoatrophy and wasting are not the same.

Lipoatrophy is a loss of fat under the skin. Wasting is the loss of both fat and muscle.

Wasting will often follow 30 days or more of loose stool, weakness and/or fever. It is the unplanned loss of more than 10% of a person's body weight.

Treatment

There is no way to restore fat once it is gone. A change in your HIV meds can slow the process.

Some things can be done to replace the fat. Sculptra® causes scar tissue and fat to collect under the skin where you inject it. Shots are given every two weeks for about three to six months. There may be some pain, but it is not severe. Other side effects may make you tender, swollen and bruised. Sometimes small lumps appear after treatment. They mostly can be felt but not seen. Results will vary.

A low level of male hormones can make you depressed, avoid social events, and have a poor sense of well-being. People with signs of facial wasting should also be checked for low male hormones to see how this can be treated.

For more information

Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call PHP Nurse Advice Line at: (800) 797-1717.

