



## Immune Reconstitution Inflammatory Syndrome

It is common to get sick when you start HIV treatment. This does not mean that the medications (meds) do not work. HIV meds do not make HIV worse. The meds help the body to be strong enough to fight infections. This is known as immune reconstitution inflammatory syndrome (IRIS).

This syndrome happens about two months after some people start HIV meds. HIV treatment can make CD4 cell counts rise quickly and viral loads drop. An old infection may come back or a new disease may start.

### Symptoms

The symptoms depend on the type of infection. The types of infection include:

- Some types of herpes
- Hepatitis B and C
- Shingles and herpes outbreaks
- Skin infections
- Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC)
- Virus in the brain
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Tuberculosis
- Pneumocystis
- Cryptococcus
- Kaposi Sarcoma
- Cytomegalovirus

### Causes and Risk Factors

IRIS happens when the immune system is very weak and then gets better. As the immune

system gets stronger, it starts to fight viruses, bacteria and parasites.

### How to Know You Have IRS

When you start HIV treatment, your doctor will follow your care very closely. Blood tests may be done. If you have an infection, a lab may grow a sample of it. This is called a culture.

### Treatment

Infections and IRIS can be treated at the same time. Stick with your HIV treatment.

Steroids can also be used to help if your organs or joints are swollen.

### Prevention

The best way to prevent this syndrome is to treat HIV before CD4 cell counts fall too low.

#### **For more information**

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

