



## Lipodystrophy

Lipodystrophy is a problem with how the body makes, uses and stores fat. There are two types:

- **Fat wasting**, where fat is lost from the arms, legs, face and buttocks. This happens more in men.
- **Fat build up**, where fat builds up on the belly, breasts and the back of the neck. This happens more in women.

### Symptoms of Lipodystrophy

Signs of this disorder include:

- Sunken cheeks, temples and eyes. Veins that stand out more on the arms and legs.
- Fat build up on the belly
- Larger breasts (in both men and women)
- Fatty growths on the body
- High cholesterol and other fats in the blood
- High blood sugar
- Buffalo hump or a pad of fat on the back of the neck

If the hump is due to HIV or drugs to treat AIDS, it will be made of fat. If the hump is due to brittle bones or a curved spine, it will be mostly made of bone.

### Causes of and Risk Factors for Lipodystrophy

Problems with fat storage have many causes:

- Some HIV meds
- Age
- Excess weight
- Too much insulin in the blood

- A curved spine
- Long term use of steroids
- Pituitary tumors
- Race (Whites are at greatest risk)
- How long a person has had HIV, what stage it is in, and how long a person has been on HIV treatment.

### How to Prevent Lipodystrophy

Nothing can prevent this disorder.

Before you begin, and while you are in treatment, a doctor will check for changes in your body fat. They will measure your arms, thighs, waist, hips and neck.

### How to Know You Have Lipodystrophy

A doctor will ask about past health problems and give you an exam. They will go over the HIV drugs that you take.

Tests may be done to find out the causes of fat build up or loss. These include blood tests to check hormone levels, X-rays or other scans.

### Lipodystrophy Treatment

Some things can be done to help deal with fat loss or build up:

- Changes in the HIV meds you take. These days, it is rare for people to take the older HIV meds that cause this disorder, so a change may not be needed. Any change should be done only after you talk to a doctor. It is too risky for some people to change their HIV treatment.
- Diet and exercise. Changes in what you eat may help cut down on fat build-up. Exercise will help build up muscle.
- Drugs that treat the causes of the disorder, such as ones to reduce insulin.

- Treatment of the effects of fat build-up, such as drugs that lower cholesterol. This does not treat the lipodystrophy, but may prevent damage to the heart and blood vessels.
- There are gel fillers that can fill in areas of fat loss. They usually need to be used more than once.
- Surgery to remove fat build up, such as liposuction is another choice.

**For more information**

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

