

# Managing Side Effects

People with HIV can have many different symptoms and possible side effects of medication. It is important to discuss any symptoms with your doctor.

## Call your doctor right away (or 911 if you can't reach your doctor) if you have:

- A rash or hives
- Rapid swelling, either in one area or over the entire body. Swelling is most serious when it involves the lips, tongue, mouth, or throat and interferes with breathing.
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing
- Low blood pressure, shock, and unconsciousness

## Call your doctor within 24 hours if you have:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Abdominal pain</li> <li>• Lightheadedness</li> <li>• Severe weakness</li> <li>• Severe headache</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nausea or vomiting</li> <li>• Jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin)</li> <li>• Diarrhea including dark urine, lightheadedness, muscle cramps</li> <li>• Blood in your stool</li> </ul> |
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## Talk to your doctor within a few days if you have:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscle pain</li> <li>• Mild weakness</li> <li>• Mild headache</li> <li>• Loss of appetite</li> <li>• Changes in body fat</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nervousness or anxiety</li> <li>• Burning or tingling in the feet</li> <li>• Strange dreams or difficulty sleeping</li> <li>• Any other symptoms that are troubling you</li> </ul> |
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# Symptoms Management Chart

Side Effect	Symptom Management	Important Notes
<b>Diarrhea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try the BRAT diet (bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast).</li> <li>• Eat foods high in soluble fiber. This kind of fiber can slow the diarrhea by soaking up liquid. Soluble fiber is found in oatmeal, grits, and soft bread (but not in whole grain).</li> <li>• Try psyllium husk fiber bars (another source of soluble fiber). You can find these at health food stores and many groceries. Eating two of these bars and drinking a big glass of water before bedtime may help your diarrhea.</li> <li>• Your provider may recommend treatments such as calcium, loperamide (Imodium), methylcellulose (Citrucel), or psyllium (Metamucil).</li> <li>• Drink plenty of clear liquids.</li> <li>• Stay away from foods high in insoluble fiber, such as whole grains, brown rice, bran, or the skins of vegetables and fruits. These kinds of foods can make diarrhea worse.</li> <li>• Avoid milk products.</li> <li>• Don't eat too many greasy, high-fiber, or very sweet foods.</li> <li>• Don't take in too much caffeine.</li> <li>• Avoid raw or undercooked fish, chicken, and meat.</li> </ul>	<p>Contact your doctor if the diarrhea is bloody or continues for more than a day, if you have abdominal pain, or you start to become dehydrated.</p>
<b>Dry Mouth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rinse your mouth throughout the day with warm, salted water.</li> <li>• Carry sugarless candies, lozenges, or crushed ice with you to cool the mouth and give it moisture.</li> <li>• Try slippery elm or licorice tea (available in health food stores). They can moisten the mouth, and they taste great!</li> </ul>	<p>Ask your doctor about mouth rinse and other products to treat your dry mouth.</p>
<b>Fatigue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get plenty of rest.</li> <li>• Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day. Changing your sleeping habits too much can actually make you feel tired.</li> <li>• Drink 8 to 12 glasses of water per day; if you want a caffeinated beverage, drink it in the morning.</li> <li>• Try to get some exercise every day.</li> <li>• Take a short nap during the day.</li> <li>• Decrease your work schedule if possible.</li> <li>• Keep prepackaged or easy-to-make food in the kitchen for times when you're too tired to cook.</li> <li>• Follow a healthy, balanced diet. Your VA health care provider may be able to help you create a meal plan.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your doctor about the possibility that you have anemia or other medical problems. Anemia means that you have a low red blood cell count, and it can make you feel tired.</p>
<b>Head-aches</b>	<p>For on-the-spot headache relief, try some of these suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie down and rest in a quiet, dark room.</li> <li>• Take a hot, relaxing bath.</li> <li>• Give yourself a "scalp massage"--massage the base of your skull with your thumbs and massage both temples gently.</li> <li>• Check with your doctor about taking an over-the-counter pain reliever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil).</li> </ul> <p>To prevent headaches from happening again, try the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid things that can cause headaches, like chocolate, red wine, onions, hard cheese, and caffeine.</li> <li>• Reduce your stress level.</li> <li>• Drink 8 to 12 glasses of water per day.</li> </ul>	<p>Your doctor may be able to recommend some over-the-counter or prescription medications.</p> <p>If your pain is severe or lasts more than a day contact your doctor right away.</p>
<b>Nausea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat smaller meals and snack more often.</li> <li>• The BRAT Diet (bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast) can help with nausea and diarrhea.</li> <li>• Keep dry crackers by your bed. Before getting out of bed in the morning, eat a few and stay in bed for a few minutes. This can help reduce nausea.</li> <li>• Try some herbal tea--such as peppermint or ginger tea.</li> <li>• Sip cold, carbonated drinks such as ginger ale.</li> </ul>	<p>Your doctor may be able to prescribe medications like Compazine.</p>

# Symptoms Management Chart (cont.)

Side Effect	Symptom Management	Important Notes
<b>Nausea (cont.)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try eating ginger, such as in ginger tea, ginger ale, or ginger snaps.</li> <li>• Talk with your VA health care provider about whether you should take medicine for your nausea.</li> <li>• If you do vomit, be sure to “refuel” your body with fluids such as broth, carbonated beverages, juice, or popsicles.</li> <li>• Avoid things that can upset the stomach, such as alcohol, aspirin, caffeine, and smoking.</li> <li>• Avoid foods or smells that trigger nausea.</li> <li>• Avoid hot or spicy foods.</li> <li>• Avoid greasy or fried foods.</li> <li>• Don’t lie down immediately after eating.</li> </ul>	Contact your doctor right away if you vomit right after taking your medications or if you vomit several times in 24 hours.
<b>Pain and Nerve Problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Massage your feet. This can help make the pain go away for a while.</li> <li>• Soak your feet in ice water to help with the pain.</li> <li>• Wear loose-fitting shoes and slippers.</li> <li>• When you’re in bed, don’t cover your feet with blankets or sheets. The bedding can press down on your feet and toes and make the pain worse.</li> <li>• Ask your doctor about taking an over-the-counter pain reliever to reduce the pain and swelling.</li> </ul>	
<b>Dry Skin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink 8 to 12 glasses of water per day.</li> <li>• Avoid long, hot showers or baths.</li> <li>• Avoid soaps and skin products that contain alcohols or harsh chemicals.</li> <li>• Use moisturizing lotion after showers (such as Aquaphor, Absorbbase, or Lac-Hydrin).</li> <li>• Use mild, unscented laundry detergents and avoid fabric softeners.</li> <li>• Use petroleum jelly on dry, itchy areas; your provider may recommend other agents to help.</li> <li>• Use sunscreen.</li> </ul>	
<b>Rash</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid very hot showers or baths. Water that is too hot can irritate the skin.</li> <li>• Avoid being in the sun. Sun exposure can make your rash worse.</li> <li>• Try using unscented, non-soapy cleansers for bathing or showering.</li> <li>• Try rubbing or pressing on the itchy areas rather than scratching.</li> <li>• A rash that blisters, or involves your mouth, the palms of your hands, or the soles of your feet, or one that is accompanied by shortness of breath, can be dangerous: contact your care provider right away, or go to an emergency room for evaluation.</li> </ul>	You should call your doctor to help find out what is causing the rash; you may need to go into clinic, as it is often difficult to treat a rash over the phone.
<b>Weight Loss</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure to keep track of your weight, by weighing yourself on scales and writing down how much you weigh. Tell your doctor if there are any changes.</li> <li>• Create your own high-protein drink by blending together yogurt, fruit (for sweetness), and powdered milk, whey protein, or soy protein.</li> <li>• Add dried milk powder, whey protein, soy protein, or egg white powder to foods (for example, scrambled eggs, casseroles, and milkshakes).</li> <li>• Between meals, try store-bought nutritional beverages or bars (such as Carnation Instant Breakfast, Benefit, Ensure, Scandishake, Boost High Protein, NuBasics). Look for ones that are high in proteins, not sugars or fats.</li> <li>• Spread peanut butter on toast, crackers, fruit, or vegetables.</li> <li>• Add cottage cheese to fruit and tomatoes.</li> <li>• Add canned tuna to casseroles and salads.</li> <li>• Add shredded cheese to sauces, soups, omelets, baked potatoes, and steamed vegetables.</li> <li>• Eat yogurt on your cereal or fruit.</li> <li>• Eat hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs. Use them in egg-salad sandwiches or slice and dice them for tossed salads.</li> <li>• Add diced or chopped meats to soups, salads, and sauces.</li> </ul>	Your doctor can help monitor your weight over time and suggest resources and a safe program for maintaining your weight.

# Symptom Management Action Plan

Side Effect	Impact on Adherence	Steps you are currently taking	What you can try now*	When to tell your PN or physician

\*See Symptoms Management Chart for Suggestions