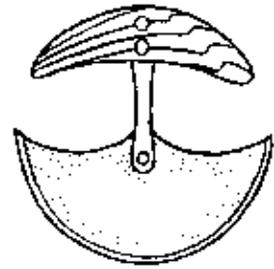




## **Information for Inuit Community Members**

### **Fact Sheet HIV-Related Fatigue**

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**Other infections.** Other infections can be very tiring to someone who is HIV positive, even if the other infections are not showing symptoms. Things like germs (parasites) in your digestive system, bronchitis, other infections or allergies can all cause fatigue. If these other infections are treated, your fatigue should decrease and energy should improve.

**Poor nutrition.** People with HIV need more energy (food) than healthy people. If you are not getting enough nutrients, your energy level will be low. Diarrhoea (a side effect of some medications) can rob your body of nutrients and may cause fatigue. If possible, meet with a dietician who knows about HIV to discuss your eating habits. For some people, vitamins and/or better nutrition can help to fight fatigue.

**Anaemia.** The main function of red blood cells is to carry oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. If you do not have enough red blood cells, or if they are not carrying enough oxygen, your fatigue may be caused by anaemia. A simple blood test will show whether you have anaemia. If you do have anaemia, your doctor will find out what is causing anaemia and he or she will help you to treat it.

**Depression.** Depression is more than just feeling sad. Chemical changes in the brain can cause fatigue and a lack of interest in daily activities. There is no blood test for depression. Depression is more likely to be diagnosed if you have previously been diagnosed with depression, if you have a history of heavy alcohol or street drug use, or if you have a family history of emotional/mental disorders. Depression can be treated with medications. However some antidepressants do not go well with some anti-HIV drugs, so they must be used very carefully. Always talk to your nurse and doctor before starting a new medication.

**Low hormone levels.** Especially in men, low levels of the sex hormone testosterone can cause fatigue and lack of interest in sex and other normal activities. Low levels of other important hormones including those made by the thyroid gland can cause similar problems. Hormone levels can be checked with blood tests. Hormone pills, patches, creams, or injections can restore hormone levels to normal and therefore reduce hormone-related fatigue.

### **What can I do about fatigue?**

Fatigue is a very common condition for people with HIV. Untreated, fatigue can make you sick faster.

It can be very hard to figure out the cause of a person's fatigue. Blood tests can show some causes but not others. The more information you can give your doctor, the easier it will be to find out what is causing your fatigue and the fatigue can be treated.

