

## Screening Tests for People with HIV over 50

Along with the routine tests for monitoring HIV, the following tests can be an effective way to measure health and are important in order to obtain early diagnosis of conditions related to HIV and/or aging:

- Bone Density (DEXA scan), including a pre-screening exam
- Blood Pressure
- Fasting Blood Glucose
- Lipids profile
- Kidney function

## Women, HIV and Menopause

The connection between HIV and menopause has not been well studied. Women with HIV may experience menopause earlier than HIV-negative women. In addition, some of the symptoms of menopause are similar to those of HIV or the side effects of HIV treatments such as night sweats, weight changes, fatigue, insomnia and depression.

This poses a challenge in the diagnosis or management of these symptoms. The use of hormonal replacement therapy in the context of HIV is another area that requires much more research.

## Why are Older Adults Becoming Infected?

- Contrary to myth, many older people remain sexually active and some experience challenges of substance abuse
- Heterosexual transmission in this population has been underestimated
- Lack of prevention education aimed at aging population
- Older people may not consider themselves to be at risk
- Lack of awareness in the medical community of the incidence of HIV in older population may delay timing or diagnosis

## Resources

### BC Persons With AIDS Society

Treatment Information Program

[www.bcpwa.org](http://www.bcpwa.org)

604.893.2243 or 1.800.994.2437

### Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange

[www.catie.org](http://www.catie.org) 1.800.263.1638

### Positive Women's Network

[www.pwn.bc.ca](http://www.pwn.bc.ca) 1.866.692.3001

### National Association on HIV Over Fifty

[www.hivoverfifty.org](http://www.hivoverfifty.org) (USA based)

### HIV Wisdom for Older Women

[www.hivwisdom.org](http://www.hivwisdom.org) (USA based)

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# HIV & AGING



**HIV and Aging** → Close to 8 percent of all reported HIV positive cases in Canada are people over 50 years of age. The number of people infected with HIV who are over 50 years of age is rising as people with HIV/AIDS live longer due to advances in treatment. However, the number of men and women over 50 who are newly diagnosed is also increasing.

### **Is it AIDS or is it Age?**

Many health changes that occur as people age are similar to symptoms of HIV/AIDS or side effects of HIV drugs. Therefore, knowing the cause of the condition and deciding on the appropriate treatment can be challenging. The following health conditions can be associated with both age and HIV:

- ▣ Overall immune function decline
- ▣ Cardiovascular disease
- ▣ High blood pressure
- ▣ Kidney disease
- ▣ Cancers
- ▣ Diabetes
- ▣ Osteoporosis & other bone disorders
- ▣ Dementia
- ▣ Depression
- ▣ Skin problems
- ▣ Nutritional problems
- ▣ Sexual dysfunction

Steps can be taken to prevent or manage these conditions. See the resource section to get further treatment information.

### **Antiretroviral Therapy in Older Adults**

Adults over 50 do not tend to participate in clinical trials, so there is not much data specific to older adults and antiretroviral therapy. Some small studies indicate that HIV drugs seem to be just as effective in suppressing the virus in older people as in those who are younger.

This may be partly due to the fact that older adults tend to have better adherence to HIV therapy than younger adults. However, CD4 counts may not increase as much in older people. Side effects do not seem to be any more frequent but they may be more severe in older adults.

Due to the myth that older adults are not at risk of getting HIV, many older people are diagnosed late. As a result, treatment may be delayed which could have a negative impact on therapy.

### **Emotional Issues and Quality of Life**

Research has shown that older adults with HIV are more likely to experience symptoms of depression than younger adults with HIV. Our society holds negative attitudes towards aging. An older person with HIV can face a double stigma.

Both aging and HIV/AIDS can result in multiple losses, which can lead to depression or anxiety. It is important to recognize and address these problems as they may interfere with adherence to treatment, health care visits, participation in social activities, and personal relationships, including a healthy sex life.