



# POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Health and Wellness Information for Members

Spring 2015



## *i* In this Issue

- Pain Management: Be Healthy and Happy in the Face of Pain
- Stay Heart Wise
- Low Viral Load Is the Goal!
- Start the New Year Right
- Take a Deep Breath
- How Safe are E-Cigs?
- Share Your Opinion
- Think About Joining a Trial!
- Your Care Team
- Prevention Points
- Special Needs
- Message from Your Health Plan

## Pain Management: Be Healthy and Happy in the Face of Pain

Most people feel pain in their body at some point each day. Often the pain will go away with time, rest, or over the counter (OTC) medicines like Advil®. Pain that stays in the body or returns over time can limit your daily activities and make you feel down. Pain may also be a sign that you have an illness that needs treatment. Most pain can be treated and cared for. It is important to see a doctor when you have pain.

### What Kind of Pain Do You Have?

There are two basic types of pain.

- **Short-term (acute).** Pain that comes on quick and goes away in less than three months
- **Long-term (chronic).** Pain that does not go away or returns often. It can come on quick or slow over time.

People with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) often have chronic pain in the head, legs, stomach, and back. Chronic pain has many causes. For PLWHA common causes are:

- **HIV neuropathy.** Many PLWHA have this syndrome. It causes nerve damage to feet, legs, hands and arms. This nerve damage can hurt and make these body parts burn, sting, or feel numb.
- **HIV Treatments.** Some HIV medicines have side-effects that cause pain.
- **Drug Misuse.** Use of drugs like heroin, cocaine, and opiates can raise a person's sense of pain.
- **Mental Illness.** Depression and other mental health problems can make people sense pain more easily.
- **Other Disease or Illness.** PLWHA are more likely to have diseases like cancer or diabetes that lead to pain. PLWHA are also more likely to have viruses like herpes or shingles that may cause pain.



P.O. Box 46160  
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Member Services  
Mon - Fri, 8:00am to 8:00pm  
Tel (800) 263-0067  
TTY/TDD: 711

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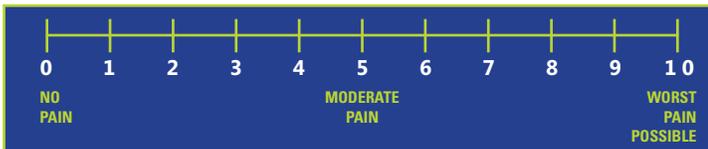
## Talk to Your Doctor about Your Pain

Talk to your doctor about any new acute or chronic pain. There are many kinds and strengths of pain. It is important to tell your doctor how the pain feels as best you can. A doctor can treat pain better when they know how it feels.

It can be hard to describe pain to a doctor. Here are words to help you talk about the pain:

Aching • Shooting • Pulsing • Sharp • Burning  
Sore • Tender • Deep • On- the- surface

It helps to tell your doctor how strong the pain is. You can rate your pain on a scale of 0-10 like this one.



## How to Manage Pain

Your doctor will give you a treatment plan to manage your pain. Many pain treatment plans use medicines. OTC meds that treat mild to moderate pain well are Advil®, Tylenol®, and Aleve®. If you have severe pain, the doctor may prescribe opiates. Opiates are a type of medicine that help relieve severe pain. Common types are morphine, Dilaudid®, and Percocet®.

Here are some basic tips to follow when you use any pain meds:

- **Take meds just like your doctor tells you.** Pain meds work when you take them at the right time and dose each day. Taking too many can hurt your liver and kidneys.
- **Only take pain meds that your doctor prescribes.** Do not use street drugs or a friend's meds. These meds can cause your body harm and make your pain treatment plan not work.
- **Keep a record of how well the meds work.** Take notes on when you take your meds and when you feel pain.
- **Talk to your doctor if you still feel pain.** Your doctor can refer you to a pain specialist or change your meds.

Many other treatments help stop pain too. The good news is these treatments are fun and help you enjoy life! Reduce your pain with these steps:

- **Get active.** Try to do 20 minutes of moderate physical activity three times each week. You can walk, lift weights, garden, bike, do yoga, or dance.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Eat five or more servings of fruit or vegetables each day. They have lots of vitamins and minerals that can help fight pain and illness.
- **Cut down on stress.** Meditation, massage, visits with friends, and hobbies are all great ways to help heal pain.
- **Sleep well.** A good night's sleep can help relieve pain. You can rest better when you go to bed at the same time each day and aim for eight hours of sleep.

## Safe Care with Opiate Use

People can get hooked (addicted) on opiate meds if they misuse them. Some people have more risk for opiate addiction. People at risk are:

- Current drug or alcohol users
- People that used or abused drugs or alcohol in the past
- People with mental illness

If you are at risk for opiate addiction, it is important to tell your doctor. You can still get relief from pain by taking steps to prevent opiate addiction. Some options are:

- **Counseling.** Ask your doctor for a referral to a mental health specialist.
- **Self-help groups.** Groups like Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous help people stay sober.
- **Methadone treatment.** This option is best for people with heroin use problems.

## Stay Heart Wise

A healthy heart is the best way to live a long and healthy life. Things you do to take care of your heart help protect you from other problems like weight gain, some cancers and stroke. Good health habits can be hard to put in place, but your whole body will thank you when you do.

Some things you can do to stay heart wise are:

- **Eat less fat.** Cut down on fats from foods like meat, cheese and butter. Choose non-fat or low-fat dairy products and lean meats like chicken with no skin and fish. There are good fats in nuts, avocados and olive oil.
- **Eat lots of fruits and veggies.** Fresh fruits and veggies have lots of fiber, vitamins and minerals to keep your body stable.
- **Make meals at home.** Food you cook from scratch tends to have less salt and fat than frozen food, processed food or fast food.
- **Get active.** Make sure you do things that get your heart rate up. Even a few 10-minute brisk walks per day can make your heart stronger.
- **Do not smoke.** Every effort you make to quit smoking is the best thing you can do for your heart.
- **Limit how much you drink.** Beer, wine and spirits can help us relax and feel good, but can be harmful if you drink too much. Talk to your doctor or RN Care Manager (RNCM) if you are not able to control how much you drink.

*When it comes to blood pressure, make control your goal! You want your blood pressure to stay under 139/89*

### Blood Pressure Basics

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a problem for most adults. It is often called the "silent killer" because there are very few symptoms. High blood pressure can lead to heart attacks, strokes, heart failure or kidney failure when it is not controlled.

Here are a few things you can do to help keep high blood pressure under control:

- **Take your meds each day.** Be sure to take your HIV and blood pressure meds at the right times each day.
- **Check your blood pressure at home.** Positive Healthcare members can get a machine to read your blood pressure from the comfort of your home.
- **Work with your healthcare team.** Be open and honest with your doctor, RNCM and yourself about your health habits. There are there to help you when you need to make hard changes.

### Strokes and Other Problems

Healthy heart habits can help protect you from strokes (brain attacks) and other health problems too. Good heart health means the blood your heart pumps reaches every part of your body. Problems arise if the blood cannot flow easily away from your heart.

Fat can build up inside your veins and slow the flow of blood to your legs and feet. This is called peripheral artery disease (PAD) and can be very painful. Ask your doctor for a test to check for PAD if you smoke, have high blood pressure or cholesterol, or if your HIV is not under control.

A stroke can happen when blood cannot get to your brain. You can reduce the damage of a stroke when you catch it early. There are 4 main signs that someone is having a stroke- the **FAST** signs:

- **F**ace drooping
- **A**rm weakness
- **S**peech difficulty
- **T**ime to call **911**

Visit the American Heart Association website to learn more about heart disease: [www.heart.org/HEARTORG/](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/)

*Positive Healthcare members can sign up for Quit for Life to help with your quit attempts. Log onto [www.quitforlife.net/ahf](http://www.quitforlife.net/ahf) or call 1-855-252-4871. This program is free for Plan members*

## Low Viral Load Is the Goal!

A low viral load is the key to good health for PLWHA. Your viral load (VL) is the amount of HIV in a small sample of your blood. It measures how well your treatment works to control HIV. The lower your viral load, the better your immune system is working.

The goal of HIV treatment is VL suppression. This means that treatment has reduced the amount of HIV in your blood to less than 200 copies. A VL is "undetectable" when a viral load test does not pick up any HIV in the sample of blood. This happens when your viral load is around 50-75 copies. A low viral load helps you live a long life and stay well.

### How to Achieve Low Viral Load

Two HIV treatment steps lead to a low viral load. They are:

- **HIV Care.** Your doctor checks your viral load and treatment plan at routine visits. It is important to see your doctor at least 3 times a year to stay well.
- **HIV Medicines.** Take your HIV medicines (meds) each day to reach viral suppression. HIV meds are one of best tools to help you live a long life.

You may need to see your PCP more often if your viral load is not under control. When your viral load is high, you are more likely to have other health problems.

### Treatment as Prevention

A low viral load also helps prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. People with low viral loads are much less likely to pass HIV to others. It is important to note that VL suppression is not a cure. You can still pass HIV to others through sex or drug use with needles. Condoms and clean needles are still the best way to prevent the spread of HIV.

### Your Health Plan Helps You Achieve Good Health!

The HIV Treatment Cascade is a way to look at how well the nation is doing to control HIV. The cascade measures HIV infection along 5 steps for PLWHA.

- Tested positive for the virus
- Linked to HIV care
- Is prescribed HIV meds
- Stays in HIV care
- Has a suppressed viral load

As a Positive Healthcare member, you can feel good about your HIV care. Your Plan supports you to remain in care, get access to HIV treatment and have a low viral load. Compared to the rest of the U.S., PHP/PHC members do much better in the steps of the treatment cascade. Only about 1 in 4 PLWHA in the country have a suppressed viral load. Nearly all of Positive Healthcare members have low levels of the virus. Now that is something to feel good about!



## Start the New Year Right

Each year we urge our members to get the most out of their Plan with their yearly check-up. This complete, whole-person exam happens each year. It takes a little longer than a normal visit and gives your doctor a chance to dig a little deeper into your health concerns. It is also the time to catch up on shots and tests to screen for cancer and other disease.

A once-a-year wellness exam helps keep you on track with your treatment plan. It can be a time to set new goals for your health. Your doctor will have a better sense of what is going on with you. Call to schedule a yearly check-up with your doctor and start the new year right!

## Take a Deep Breath

Have you ever felt a squeeze in your chest? Maybe you feel like it is hard to take a breath. For many people this happens all the time. It can be a scary when you cannot get enough air. Two main causes make people feel short of breath:

- Asthma
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

COPD describes a group of health issues that make it hard to breathe. Healthy lungs allow air to pass freely. People with COPD have blocked airways. The airways swell, thicken, and make it hard to breathe. The most common cause of COPD is smoking.

### What is COPD?

A group of health problems that make it hard to breathe

- **Emphysema**-damaged air sacs in the lungs
- **Chronic Bronchitis**-airways swell and fill with mucus

### What Does COPD Feel Like?

Symptoms of COPD include:

- Shortness of breath
- Frequent cough, "smoker's cough"
- Cannot take a deep breath
- Wheeze
- Excess mucus

### What is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease of the lungs that can be treated, but not cured. It can affect anyone. Nearly 1 out of 12 people have asthma. An asthma attack can range between mild and severe and be a scary time for someone who suffers from asthma. Severe attacks can be deadly.

Asthma "triggers" set off asthma attacks. An "asthma trigger" is something you are exposed to that causes your lungs to react. Know your triggers and how to avoid them.



### What are my Triggers?

Common asthma triggers include, but are not limited to:

- Tobacco smoke
- Air pollution or smog
- Increased heart rate
- Pollen
- Mold
- Animal fur
- Dust mites
- Perfume

### How can I Protect Myself?

- Do not smoke and avoid secondhand smoke
- Avoid toxins in the air and harsh chemicals
- Visit your doctor often
- Take your meds as your doctor prescribes
- Avoid the flu
- Stay healthy

People with HIV may be at a greater risk of asthma or COPD if their immune system is weak. Your risk is even greater if you have a low CD4 count and smoke. Smoking is one of the main causes of COPD and other breathing problems. See your doctor and ask for a breath test if you smoke, have a heavy cough or cannot take deep breaths.

The good news is that with the support of your doctor and RNCM, you can manage symptoms of COPD and asthma. There are meds that help relieve symptoms of COPD and control how often you have asthma attacks.

### Learn more about lung health:

**COPD:** [www.cdc.gov/copd/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/copd/index.htm)

**Asthma:** [www.cdc.gov/asthma/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/default.htm)

## How Safe are E-Cigs?

E-cigarettes (e-cigs) came onto the market in 2007. They are also called hookah pens, vapes, vape pens or mods. An e-cig is a device that heats up a liquid to make a type of smokeless mist or vapor. The mist contains nicotine, the main compound in tobacco, which is very addictive. The liquid also comes in flavors like cherry, bubble gum or cotton candy. "Vaping" is how some describe the use of an e-cig.

### What are the Concerns?

There has been much debate in recent years about the safety of e-cigs. Some people think that they are safer than normal cigarettes since there is no smoke going into the lungs. They argue that e-cigs help people quit smoking just like a nicotine patch or gum.

Others are concerned that we do not know enough about the long-term effects of e-cig use. The FDA has no control over what types of chemicals go into the liquid or how much nicotine e-cigs release in the mist. Very few studies look at how the second-hand "smoke" affects people in close contact with an e-cig user. Research has found that the mist from e-cigs has tiny pieces of risky compounds and heavy metals that users inhale.

### Are There Other Issues?

There are concerns about e-cig use by teens and young adults. The makers of e-cigs target young people in their ad campaigns and product flavors. Nicotine can be harmful to young brains. It can affect how the brain forms when exposed over time.

There is also a danger that the e-cig liquid can poison very young children. The liquid often comes in brightly colored packages that children mistake for candy. The Poison Control Centers report a steep increase in the number of children under 5 poisoned by e-cig products.

### Should I Use E-cigs to help me Quit Smoking?

There is no proof that e-cigs help people kick the nicotine habit. They are not approved by the FDA as a tool to help you quit. It is safer to use patches, gum or drops to help wean you off nicotine in a slow and steady process. You can talk to your doctor if you need more information about how to find the best way for you to quit smoking.

## Share Your Opinion

Your voice counts! This spring you might get a survey about your Health Plan in the mail. The survey may ask about your health or what you think about your Health Plan. All of the answers are put together in a summary. We are not told the details of who said what. Your answers will be private.

Your feedback helps us improve the care and services we provide. One survey that goes out every year is:

- **Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS).** This survey asks you how you feel about your doctors, nurses, health plan and drug program.

Please take the time to fill out the surveys and send them back as soon as you can. Thank you!



## Think About Joining a Trial!

New drug trials and treatment studies start all the time. These help create better treatment for all people living with HIV/AIDS. There are many types of clinical trials. One may be perfect for you. Your doctor may ask you to join a trial. Think about it!

For more info call: (323) 913-1033

## Your Care Team

Good health and healthcare come from teamwork. Positive Healthcare works with your doctor, pharmacist, social worker and others on your care team to make sure you get the best care for you when you need it. You are at the center of this team. Your strongest partner is your RN Care Manager (RNCM).

You can think of your RNCM as your own personal nurse. They help manage your care with the others on your healthcare team. Your RNCM is there for you in a number of different ways.

- **If you feel sick.** Your RNCM can answer questions about symptoms and tell you what to do. They can tell you if you should see your doctor or go to the hospital.
- **Complex care.** Most people have more than one doctor. There are doctors for your heart, your bones, your skin and more. Your RNCM helps manage all the special doctors you need to visit.
- **Health coach.** As a health coach, your RNCM can help you adopt and keep healthy habits. They can explain your labs to you, suggest ways to take your meds the right way and how to live well with HIV.
- **Advocate.** An advocate is someone who sticks up for you. Your RNCM will protect your rights as a Positive Healthcare member and make sure you are informed about every part of your care. If you have any concerns about your care, call your RNCM.

Keep in touch with your RN Care Manager.  
They are here for you!

Call Toll-Free Mon-Fri, 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM

**Tel: (800) 474-1434**

After-Hours Nurse Advice Line Mon-Fri

5:30 PM- 8:30 AM and 24 hours on weekends

**Tel: (800) 797-1717**



## Prevention Points

**Prevention is key to a healthy life. Be sure to:**

- ✓ Stay in touch with your doctor, nurse care manager and social worker
- ✓ Get labs to check your viral load and CD4 count often
- ✓ Take your HIV medications as prescribed
- ✓ Talk to your doctor about an Advance Directive (Five Wishes Guide)
- ✓ Get a glaucoma test for your eyes
- ✓ Talk to your doctor about tests to check for colon, prostate and rectal cancer
- ✓ Get an anal pap test each year
- ✓ Get a pap test of the cervix (women only)
- ✓ Ask for routine STD screening
- ✓ Work out 30 to 60 minutes, 5 days a week
- ✓ Eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and veggies daily
- ✓ Practice safer sex
- ✓ Stop smoking
- ✓ Limit alcohol use
- ✓ Stop illegal drug use
- ✓ See friends and be social for mental health and well-being

## Special Needs

We know many of our members have special needs that make it hard to communicate with their healthcare team or Health Plan. Tell the doctor, nurse care manager or other member of your health home team if English is the not language you speak. We can call an interpreter who speaks your language. If you are deaf, hard-of-hearing or have other special needs, we can arrange a service to help us communicate with you. For your health, it is vital that you and your doctor or healthcare team understand each other. This service is free to you.



## *A Message from Your Health Plan*

### **Your Contact Information**

PHC California cares about you and your health. We need to know if you moved or got a new phone number. Please call Member Services to update your record any time you make a change.

### **Member Services**

Monday-Friday 8:00am-8:00pm • (800) 263-0067 TTY/TTD: 711

### **Medication Therapy Management Program (MTMP)**

As part of PHC California, you are enrolled in the MTMP. This Program helps people who take many prescribed meds. The Program lowers the chance of mistakes and reactions with your meds.

Your health care team will be in touch with you and your doctor. They will explain the drugs that you take. Your doctor will know of safety issues with your meds. Any other health issues will also be handled. Your RN Care Manager will contact you to make an action plan for your meds. An action plan with your nurse care manager will help with any problems you may have. The action plan will let you know just how and when to take your meds.

### **Compliance Hotline**

Help us look out for Medi-Cal fraud and abuse. For example, if your Explanation of Benefits lists charges that are wrong, call Member Services. Call our Compliance Hotline if you suspect fraud or abuse.

**Compliance Hotline:** (800) AIDS-HIV • (800) 243-7448

## *We want to hear from you!*

**The Client Advisory Committee is a great way to tell us what you think about your Health Plan! We welcome all health plan members and AHF Healthcare Center clients. You can share your questions, concerns and comments with our Health Plan leaders. We use your concerns to make your Plan better. Come to the next meeting to find out what your Health Plan can do for you!**

### **California - Los Angeles**

Tuesday, June 23, 2015

6255 W. Sunset Blvd, 21st Floor

To RSVP, **call Santiago at (800) 243-2101**

***Food and drinks will be served.***

## *Questions?*

### **Contact Your RN Care Manager**

Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5:30pm

Tel: (800) 474-1434

### **Urgent After-Hours Nurse Advice Line**

Mon-Fri, 5:30pm-8:30am and 24 hours on Weekends. Available 365 days a year.

Tel: (800) 797-1717