

Advice on managing diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is a common problem when living with HIV. It can be a side-effect of antiretrovirals or can be caused by HIV itself.

How do I know if I've got diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea is defined as having three or more loose or liquid stools per day. Treating diarrhoea is important to limit loss of nutrients, protect health and prevent malnutrition.

Try to keep eating and drinking. If your symptoms persist for more than a few days, consider contacting your healthcare team to get checked for infections.



Should I see my doctor?

Your doctor can prescribe the following treatments or you can buy them from the chemists.

- Anti-diarrhoea drugs such as Imodium (Loperamide).
- Oat-bran tablets. These are effective against diarrhoea caused by medication.
- In cases of severe diarrhoea, your doctor may prescribe oral rehydration solutions to replace electrolytes such as sodium and potassium.

Homemade rehydration drink

To replace fluids it is possible to make your own rehydration drink at home:

- 1) **Make up one litre of orange squash as directed by the manufacturer.**
- 2) **Add half a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda and half a teaspoon of salt.**
- 3) **Stir until dissolved.**

By adding bicarbonate of soda and salt, you will be replacing essential electrolytes in addition to replacing lost fluids. This is important because electrolytes regulate the amount of water in your body, your blood acidity and your muscle action.

When suffering with diarrhoea, try to drink at least two litres of fluid per day.

