Haart-less and Healthy

Checking HIV for 20 years—with prednisone alone

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Mark Milano
49
New York
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Diagnosed 1982

New Yorker Mark Milano has had CD4s as low as 74, but he's found a way to stay med-free and healthy. His secret? A steroid that, oddly, suppresses your immune system. Say what? Read on.

The Discovery: "In 1985, I had sarcoidosis, a non-HIV autoimmune condition. [Corticosteroid] prednisone cleared it up. I kept taking it for the condition—and my CD4s held up. Then, I read that prednisone slows HIV. When I tried testosterone instead, I lost CD4s."

The Take: "Dosing is key. Taking too much or taking it daily causes hormone problems. I take 15 mg every other day, with only minor muscle loss and fat gain (which may just be age!). I'll give up muscle for the CD4s!"

The Science: "HIV needs activated CD4 cells to reproduce, and low-dose prednisone suppresses immune activity just enough to slow down HIV."

The Result: "I'm healthy and active. My CD4s stay around 400, though my viral load is 475,000.

The Future: "If my CD4s settle at 200, I'll be happy to go on HIV meds."

The Feelings: "I'm glad I stuck with what I felt was right. I don't know if it will work for others, but it works for me."

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