



Navigating Side Effects on Your HIV Regimen

Here are some questions to consider with your doctor.

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Thankfully, today people living with HIV have many good, tolerable options when it comes to their medications. That means that more people can get the medication they need without having to worry about debilitating side effects interrupting their daily lives. Despite steady improvements over the decades, some people still experience side effects.

It's important to understand the side effects as best you can and talk with your doctor about them. Here are some questions you can ask yourself as well as your health care professional.

1. Is it actually my medication?

The first step when you notice any type of side effect is to talk to your doctor about it. After you tell your doctor what you're experiencing, they will be able to do the appropriate testing to identify the cause. Sometimes lifestyle changes can improve side effects.

2. Should I wait it out?

Fortunately, some side effects are not long term. As your body gets used to a drug, over time, you may better tolerate it and the side effects could vanish. Keep discussing the severity and duration of your side effects with your doctor, so they can better identify any next steps regarding your treatment.

"If it clears up in less than a month, it's onboarding-related," says Kris Bungay, MD, an internal medicine physician at NYU Langone.

3. Ask yourself whether you can tolerate the side effects.

Aside from talking with your doctor, one of the most important conversations you can have is with yourself. Though most HIV medication is tolerable, everyone is different. If you are experiencing side effects, you and your doctor can determine whether or not they're tolerable and whether you can adopt any strategies to avoid or minimize them.

4. Become more familiar with your options.

If you determine that your side effects are intolerable and you do want to switch treatments, it's important to know all your options. Your doctor can certainly make some suggestions, but it's also a good idea to familiarize yourself with the [2025 POZ Drug Chart](#), which not only lays out available regimens but also includes information on potential aftereffects.

5. If you need someone to talk to, find them.

When it comes to side effects, the most important person to talk to is your doctor. But if you want to talk to people who may have had the same experience you're having, seek out other people living with HIV on the [POZ Forums](#). While your doctor's medical advice is helpful, people who share your lived experiences can also be invaluable in helping you make decisions about your care.