Walk On

The reasons for gaining weight aren't always clear.

November 2, 2020 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I've never been what most people would call a thin person. There was a time in the late 1980s when I had a consistent size 30 waist. Let's just say that changed as I got older.

When it comes to the subject of weight, we are all a bit sensitive. Not only are we dealing with our health and self-image, but we are also reacting to the judgment of others. Being comfortable in our skin is always a challenge; carrying excess weight doesn't make it any easier.

For those of us living with HIV who have access to health care, staying in good health usually includes taking antiretroviral medications. These HIV meds keep the virus in check, which is vital. If we reach and maintain an undetectable viral load, we can't transmit HIV via sex. Taking our HIV meds is nonnegotiable.

So it is particularly frustrating that some HIV meds are linked to weight gain. Attention to this issue has increased in the past few years. Researchers haven't figured it all out yet, but they are finding out more all the time. That is why we have dedicated this special issue to understanding weight gain.

Lepena Reid knows something about this topic. A lot, actually. By her count, the long-term survivor has gained 20 pounds in the past two years, despite eating healthy. Her physician has switched her HIV meds as a result. Click here to read more about her journey.

For many of us, the reasons for gaining weight aren't always clear. Years ago, I gained weight after switching HIV meds. I had never considered until very recently that the meds could have played a role. I managed to slowly drop the weight, and I have changed meds since then, so the mystery will remain.

Robert Gillum is going through something similar. He says he gained 20 to 25 pounds in the past three years after he switched meds. His doctor can't confirm or deny whether his current treatment is to blame, but they are discussing changing his meds. Click here for more.

Regardless of the reasons for weight gain, there are related health risks. Weight gain has been linked to health problems ranging from cardiovascular disease and diabetes to cancer and cognitive decline. Click here to learn more.

The good news is that managing weight gain is possible. A healthy diet and exercise are key to controlling excess weight. There is one thing that you shouldn’t do: delay or stop your HIV treatment. Click here for more.

Weight gain isn’t as simple as it seems. Generalized weight gain among people living with HIV is often due to the same factors that cause those who are HIV negative to put on pounds. Click here to discover there is much more to the story.

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