Recently Diagnosed & Starting Meds? This Is For You!

November 15, 2010 By David Capogna

Valley of the Dolls

I recently joined a HIV+ men's group the LGBT Center in New York City. Some of the guys were on meds others were not. A lot of the guys who were taking meds still had questions or adherence problems. I'm not a certified expert but after 17 years of practice I do have some tips on HIV/AIDS medication.

GET A PILL CONTAINER: (Stop worrying that only old people with Alzheimer's in nursing homes use them. It's not necessarily the case, so get over it!) A pharmacy will carry either a long strip with slots for each day of the week or individual pill boxes for people on the go. Whether going to school, work or taking a trip your pills will be sorted out for each day. Also, it makes you more unlikely to forget doses or double dose.

ADD VITAMINS & SUPPLEMENTS: It doesn't stop with the HIV/AIDS meds. You'll have a few more pills to include in your pill box. Countless studies have been done on the importance of vitamins and supplements while taking HIV meds. I would suggest an appointment with a nutritionist or an integrative pharmacist to get the full story. A lot of doctors only focus on the meds and numbers. You really need to be proactive, you life is in your hands. First I would start with a multivitamin. These HIV meds are toxic, as well as helpful, whatever you can do to maintain an adequate supply of vitamins in essential. Selenium, an antioxidant nutrient, can lower the rate of progression of HIV and lengthen your life. Coenzyme Q10 is critical for immune function and combating high cholesterol, which may be a side effect of the HIV meds. I'm just throwing these out there. Do some on-line research and/or contract an expert to point out what vitamins and supplements can help your particular case. The point is to think beyond your meds!

QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED:

1) Is it okay that I miss a dose or do not take my pills at regular intervals during the day?

Ideally, if you're taking your pills two times a day and start at 8am you should follow up with the second dose at 8pm. But you might be out to dinner or somewhere else and forget. As long as you take your pills within 2 to 3 hours before or after 8pm you won't see a different in your

numbers. Missing an entire day for whatever reason is not the end of the world. Try not to do this on a regular basis and you'll be fine.

2) Will I starting wasting immediately?

TRUE: One of the guys in the group actually asked this question. The answer is NO. Most doctors and researchers agree the cause of wasting was from meds that are no longer available at least in the US. Zerit (d4t) and AZT were giving to HIV+ individuals in the 80's and 90's and sometimes, not always, caused patients to lose fat cells permanently.

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