



plain and simple facts

NUTRITION



Wasting

What is wasting?

- Wasting is an unexplained weight loss of 10% or more of your normal body weight.
- Wasting can occur when you have chronic diarrhea for more than one month, or chronic weakness with fever for more than one month.

What causes wasting?

- Wasting can be caused by many factors, including social, economic, mental, emotional and physical.
- Wasting can be caused by either not taking in enough food (malnutrition) or not being able to absorb the nutrition from the food that is eaten (malabsorption).
- **Malnutrition** can be caused by:
 - ~ an inability to afford food due to limited income.
 - ~ poor appetite due to depression, illness or side effects of medications.
 - ~ not having energy to shop for, prepare or cook food.
 - ~ a problem with chewing or swallowing due to gum or teeth diseases, or thrush or ulcers in the mouth or throat.
 - ~ a problem with keeping food down due to nausea and vomiting.
 - ~ feeling full after eating only a little because the stomach is not emptying the food properly.
- **Malabsorption** can be caused by:
 - ~ infection in the stomach or bowels that causes the loss of their ability to absorb nutrients from food that is eaten.
 - ~ diarrhea due to infections in the stomach and bowels or due to side effects of medications.

What are the symptoms of wasting?

- loss of more than 10% of your original body weight without trying
- loss of appetite
- nausea and vomiting
- diarrhea

How can wasting be prevented?

- Good nutrition: talk to a dietitian or nutritionist who can give you advice on what kind of food to eat that will match your body's needs.

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- Take additional vitamins or nutritional supplements.
- Exercise to build and strengthen your muscles may help prevent loss of body mass.
- Consult a physician and/or dentist when you experience symptoms that affect your appetite, eating or swallowing. They can help find out what caused the problems and start treatment early.

How can wasting be treated?

- Treatment should be based on the cause of the symptoms. Sometimes a combination of strategies is needed to help the problem.
- Ulcers and gum diseases can be treated with medications such as thalidomide.
- Thrush can be treated with medications such as ketoconazole, fluconazole or itraconazole.
- Diarrhea can be treated with medications such as Imodium, Lomotil or somatostatin, or treating infections in the gut that cause diarrhea.
- Appetite can be stimulated with medications such as Megace or Marinol.
- Weight gain can be stimulated with medications such as anabolic steroids or human growth hormone.
- In some cases, short-term or long-term feeding through a tube in the stomach or in a vein may be helpful for people with severe wasting.

Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.



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Funding has been provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada.