



### What is MAC?

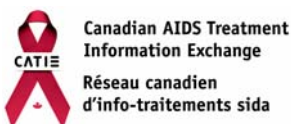
- MAC stands for Mycobacterium avium complex. It is a bacteria that is closely related to the germs that cause tuberculosis (TB). However, it is not transmitted in the same way as TB. TB can be passed on from one person to another through close contact and coughing, but MAC cannot.

### How does someone get MAC?

- The germ MAC is found in soil and water. Most people have already been exposed to it. In people with healthy immune systems, it usually does not cause illness. In people with HIV whose CD4 count is below 100, MAC can cause serious illness.

### What are the symptoms of MAC?

- The symptoms of MAC can include fever, chills, weight loss, night sweats, watery diarrhea, abdominal pain, weakness and fatigue. It can also cause anemia (a decrease of the red blood cells in your body).
- MAC is a slow developing bacteria, so the symptoms may be mild at first and may gradually get worse over weeks and months.



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**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.**

## **Mycobacterium Avium Complex**

- ☛ MAC can be diagnosed by a blood test. If your CD4 count is below 100, your doctor should do a blood test for you to check for this infection.

### **How can MAC be prevented?**

- ☛ Since MAC only causes illness in people with very weak immune systems (CD4 count below 100), the best way to prevent it is to stay healthy and keep your CD4 cells at a higher level.
- ☛ Anti-HIV medications can help you maintain the health of your immune system and keep your CD4 count high.
- ☛ If your CD4 count is below 100, you can take medications to prevent MAC. Common medications that are used to prevent MAC include:
  - azithromycin (Zithromax) 1,200 mg once a week by mouth
  - clarithromycin (Biaxin) 500 mg twice a day by mouth
  - rifabutin (Mycobutin) 300 mg once a day by mouth

### **How can MAC retinitis be treated?**

- ☛ MAC is a difficult germ to treat and can become resistant to the effects of one medication alone, so usually a combination of several medications together is needed when you have MAC.
- ☛ The common medications that are used in combination to treat MAC include:
  - clarithromycin (Biaxin)
  - azithromycin (Zithromax)
  - rifabutin (Mycobutin)
  - ciprofloxacin (Cipro)
  - ethambutol (Myambutol)
- ☛ The choice of which drugs to use will depend on your overall health, your symptoms, which drugs you are allergic to, other HIV medications you are taking and other factors.
- ☛ The medications usually do not kill all the MAC bacteria, so treatments often need to be continued for life.



## Mycobacterium Avium Complex

- ☛ With the recent advance in HIV treatments, some people have major improvements in their CD4 counts. When your CD4 count rises above 100 and stays above 100 for a few months, you may be able to stop treatments for MAC. Talk with your doctor about this possibility.

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This information is also available in Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese

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