

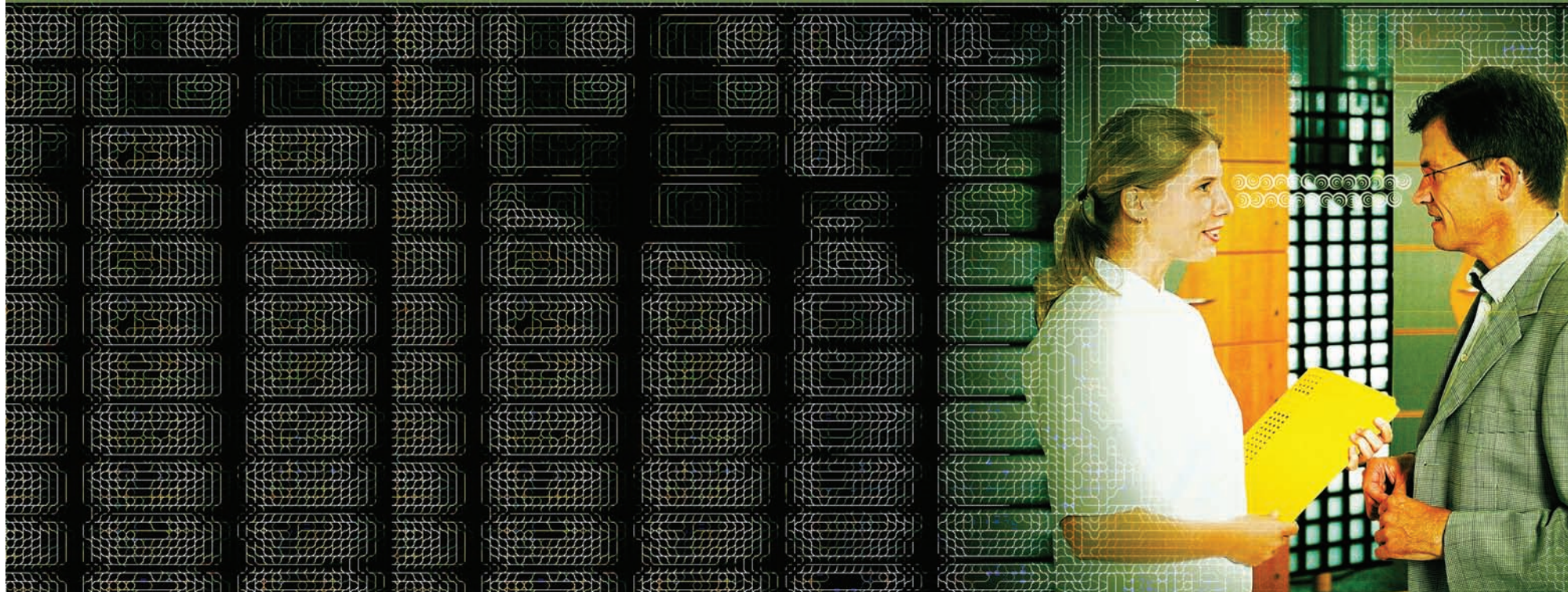
Having the right doctor is essential, but educating yourself about HIV and health is also important.

To learn more, visit our website at

www.bcpwa.org.

Or contact the Treatment Information office at the British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society at **604.893.2243** or **1.800.994.2473**.

Monitoring your Health & Working with your Doctor



Additional resources:

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange

www.catie.org 1.800.263.1368

Positive Women's Network

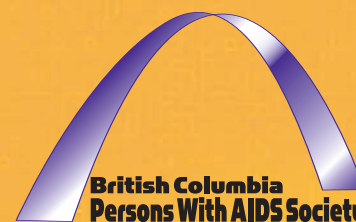
www.pwn.bc.ca 1.866.692.3001

Project Inform

www.projectinform.org

AIDS Meds

www.aidsmeds.com



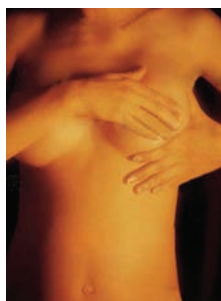
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If you are living with HIV, finding a doctor that you feel comfortable with is the first and most important step to take. Find a doctor with whom you can build a relationship, so you can freely discuss issues related to your health.

Be proactive about your health. Watch for changes in your body and how you are feeling. Get regular medical check-ups, including necessary tests and vaccinations.

Here is a general health checklist:

Monthly:



Women: Perform skin, oral and breast self-exams. Check for any warts, sores and yeast infections

Men: Perform testicular, skin, oral, anal and breast self-exams. Check for any warts, sores and lesions

Every 2-3 months:

Ensure that your doctor schedules regular blood work to monitor your CD4 count and viral load

Yearly:

Men and Women: Full physical exam to check your lymph nodes, skin, blood pressure, heart, lungs, eyes, ears, and mouth. Your doctor may also do a blood chemistry profile, urinalysis, rectal exam and tests for sexually transmitted diseases or infections (STDs/STIs)



Women: Pelvic exam, pap smear, and breast examination

Men: Prostate exam

Over 30: Electrocardiogram (EKG)



Every 2 years:

Bone density test

Every 5 years:

Tuberculosis (TB) skin test and pneumonia vaccine (Pneumovax)

Every 10 years:

Tetanus/Diphtheria booster

How should I prepare for a visit with my doctor?

- Write down your medical history, including all current health conditions, surgeries, allergies, and serious illnesses.
- Know your family's medical history, especially serious illnesses or health problems.
- Be prepared to discuss your sexual history. You may be asked about the number of sexual partners you've had, your sexual practices, and whether you practice safe sex. You will also be asked if you have any STDs/STIs.
- Identify any emotional and mental health issues. For example, if you suffer from anxiety or depression, be sure to mention this to your doctor.
- List all prescription and non-prescription medications you are taking or have taken in the past. Include alternative medicines such as herbs or vitamins.

- Write down all vaccinations you have had.
- Identify any recreational drugs that you use and how often you use them.
- Women should be prepared to discuss details about their menstrual cycle and method of birth control.
- List all other medical specialists or alternative health care practitioners you are seeing.
- Your doctor will have only a limited amount of time to spend with you, so prepare, in advance, the questions you would like to ask. If you need more time, schedule a longer follow-up appointment.

Health questions to ask your doctor

- 1] When should I start taking HIV medications?
- 2] What are the short-term and long-term side effects of the medications?
- 3] How will my HIV drugs interact with other medications that I take?
- 4] How are the medications taken?
- 5] Do I take my HIV drugs with food or on an empty stomach?
- 6] How often are blood tests necessary to monitor my CD4 count and viral load?
- 7] What do my blood results mean?
- 8] Should I get a Hepatitis A & B vaccination?
- 9] How does HIV affect women differently than men?