

FACT SHEET: REHABILITATION FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

The purpose of this fact sheet is to identify some of the health-related challenges that you might experience living with HIV and discuss how rehabilitation services and providers may help you to address these challenges.

DO YOU KNOW...

- How to deal with fatigue, pain and other physical symptoms? Yes No
- Where to get support to help you:
- Carry out personal care and household chores? Yes No
 - Deal with the overall impact of HIV on your life (e.g. financial situation, sex drive)? Yes No
 - Address your feelings (e.g. anxiety, stress) about having HIV? Yes No
 - Deal with the way your family and friends respond to HIV? Yes No
 - Deal with the way your partner and you deal with HIV? Yes No
- What kinds of exercises are helpful to improve your overall health? Yes No
- What kinds of assistive devices or types of equipment are available to help you with your day-to-day tasks such as walking, climbing stairs, and taking a bath? Yes No
- How HIV can impact your employment, income support and extended health care benefits? Yes No
- How you might talk to your employer and colleagues at work about HIV? Yes No
- How you can use rehabilitation to help manage your disease? Yes No

*If you answered **NO** to **any** of the above questions, then you may benefit from accessing a rehabilitation service or provider. Speak with your health care team to learn more!*

WHAT IS REHABILITATION?

Rehabilitation is any service that can address or prevent the various types of health related challenges (or disabilities) that people living with HIV face. Rehabilitation is an important component of optimal care for many common chronic conditions such as arthritis, heart disease and diabetes. In these diseases, rehabilitation is not only used as a treatment but also for prevention of certain conditions or worsening of current health problems. There are several different types of rehabilitation providers who can help you address the different types of health-related challenges that you may face.



WHO IS PART OF THE REHABILITATION HEALTH CARE TEAM?

Physical Rehabilitation:

- ✘ Physical Therapists (Physiotherapists)
- ✘ Occupational Therapists
- ✘ Speech-Language Pathologists
- ✘ Physiatrists

Psychosocial Rehabilitation:

- ✘ Psychiatrists
- ✘ Psychotherapists
- ✘ Mental Health Counsellors
- ✘ Occupational Therapists

Vocational Rehabilitation:

- ✘ Vocational Counsellors
- ✘ Rehabilitation Counsellors
- ✘ Occupational Therapists

Complementary or Alternative Therapies

- ✘ acupuncture
- ✘ massage therapy
- ✘ yoga, meditation, tai chi
- ✘ chiropractic
- ✘ traditional healing (e.g. sweat lodge, Sundance)

PHYSICAL REHABILITATION: WHAT CAN YOUR REHABILITATION TEAM DO FOR YOU?

A Physical Therapist (physiotherapy) can help you with:

- ✘ Managing or reducing your pain, numbness or tingling sensations
- ✘ Helping you feel less tired
- ✘ Strengthening your muscles
- ✘ Improving movement in your joints
- ✘ Maintaining or improving your flexibility, balance and coordination
- ✘ Building your activity tolerance
- ✘ Helping you learn to use a cane or walker if you need one

An Occupational Therapist (occupational therapy) can help you with:

- ✘ Managing your daily activities
- ✘ Changing your living or work space to accommodate any physical limitations you may have
- ✘ Organizing your activities to assist with focus and memory
- ✘ Suggesting ways of organizing your days to conserve your energy
- ✘ Using helpful aids or equipment
- ✘ Strategizing around complex medication schedules
- ✘ Determining how your family or other services in the community can support you

A Speech-Language Pathologist (speech therapy) can help you with:

- ✘ Issues affecting communication (speech, language, or thinking) and swallowing
- ✘ Maximizing oral and written communication skills for staying at, or returning to work (e.g. reading, writing and public speaking)

A Physiatrist is a doctor who specializes in physical medicine and rehabilitation and can help you with:

- ✘ Regaining movement or physical functioning you have lost
- ✘ Addressing chronic pain
- ✘ Accessing any special tests or procedures needed

PSYCHOSOCIAL REHABILITATION: WHAT CAN YOUR REHABILITATION TEAM DO FOR YOU?

People living with HIV can experience stress, anxiety, depression, changes in sleep and appetite and reduced sex drive (libido). Self-esteem and relationships also can be affected.

Psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, occupational therapists and mental health counsellors can help by:

- ✦ Providing therapy or counselling to help you cope with the emotional impact of HIV
- ✦ Suggesting strategies and techniques to relieve anxiety and stress
- ✦ Helping you reduce feelings of stress and isolation
- ✦ Connecting you with peer support groups
- ✦ working with you to Improve your self-esteem, maintaining personal relationships and support networks
- ✦ Prescribing medication, if necessary (psychiatrists only)

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION: WHAT CAN YOUR REHABILITATION TEAM DO FOR YOU?

Staying in the workforce, or returning to the workforce after a period of illness, is often complicated if you have HIV

- ✦ You may be concerned about how you will be treated if people find out you are HIV positive
- ✦ You may not know if or when to tell your employer about your HIV status
- ✦ You may not want to leave your HIV medication in the refrigerator at work
- ✦ You may not have the stamina to work fulltime and your workplace might not be able to accommodate part-time hours

If you have been on long-term disability benefits and return to work, you may be concerned about income or health benefits if you get sick again.

Occupational therapists, vocational rehabilitation programs and some AIDS service organizations provide:

- ✦ Training and employment counselling
- ✦ Counselling about income support, health and disability benefits
- ✦ Information about your legal rights
- ✦ Job search and interview support
- ✦ Advocacy on your behalf

COMPLEMENTARY or ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

Some people living with HIV also find that complementary or alternative therapies are helpful to address the many physical, mental or emotional challenges they face. These include:

- ✦ acupuncture
- ✦ massage therapy
- ✦ chiropractic
- ✦ yoga, meditation, tai chi
- ✦ traditional healing (e.g. sweat lodge, Sundance)

HOW CAN YOU ACCESS REHABILITATION SERVICES?

Rehabilitation services are provided in many different settings. This depends on the nature of your illness, what you are looking for, and what services are available in your community.

Some of the most common settings are:

- ✕ hospitals
- ✕ outpatient centres and clinics
- ✕ hospices
- ✕ public health departments
- ✕ vocational work settings
- ✕ wellness centres
- ✕ local AIDS service organizations
- ✕ community parks and recreation programs (e.g. YMCA)
- ✕ private practices of health care professionals

HOW CAN YOU BOOK AN APPOINTMENT FOR REHABILITATION?

You will need an assessment and referral by a doctor to access many rehabilitation services. This is especially important if they are being paid for by your province's health plan or private insurance. If the service is provided by your local AIDS service organization, you probably won't need a referral.

HOW CAN YOU PAY FOR REHABILITATION SERVICES?

Rehabilitation services may be partially or fully covered by provincial health plans or private insurers. Some rehabilitation providers have a sliding fee scale for people without insurance while local AIDS organizations may provide some rehabilitation services for free.

Talk to your doctor, rehabilitation provider, human resource department, insurance company, and/or local AIDS service organization to find out what is covered for you.

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CWGHR
Promoting quality
of life through
research, education
and cross-sector
partnerships



On-line HIV and rehabilitation resources:
Canadian Association for Occupational Therapists
www.otworks.ca

Canadian Physiotherapy Association
www.physiotherapy.ca

Canadian Association of Speech-Language
Pathologists & Audiologists
www.caslpa.ca

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
www.aidslaw.ca

Casey House
www.caseyhouse.com

To find out more, please visit
www.hivandrehab.ca

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