



Weight Loss

Dimock Community Health Center



What causes weight loss in people with HIV?

Weight loss is common in people with HIV. Weight loss can happen at any point of the disease.

Weight loss can happen for several reasons.

1. Not eating enough food – no appetite, painful swallowing, or just too tired to eat or cook.
2. Food not staying in your body – vomiting or diarrhea.
3. Burning up too many calories – infections (including HIV), thyroid problems, and cancers.

How are the causes of weight loss diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask questions about your weight loss, including your eating habits and what you do for exercise. He or she will ask about your symptoms, as well as your medications. A physical examination will be done and laboratory tests might be ordered. The workup and treatment will depend on your symptoms.

What is wasting syndrome?

When people with HIV lose weight without any other cause except HIV, we call this wasting syndrome. This problem is usually associated with some fevers and diarrhea.

What can be done about weight loss?

The best way you can guard against too much weight loss is to keep in touch with your provider about your weight. Be alert to changes in taste or appetite, as well as increased tiredness or weakness.

The treatment will depend on why you are losing weight. Your provider may give you nutritional supplements and medications to control your symptoms or help your appetite while your evaluation is underway.