

**Part Two**  
**Common problems in people aging with HIV**

**Chapter 6**  
**Weakness/frailty**

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**Section I. Frailty and its importance**

**6-1. What does frailty mean?**

Frailty, or weakness, means the body cannot fight off problems as well as it should. When there is an infection, frail people cannot fight it off very well. When they have accidents, their injury is worse compared to regular people. When they work, they get tired easily. They are slow and cannot do very much.

**6-2. Why do aging people with HIV have weakness?**

People with HIV get weak sooner and more often than regular people. It might be because of what HIV does to the body, but no one knows for sure.

**6-3. What happens when you are frail?**

Frail people are weak and cannot get around very well. This makes it hard to work or do things they enjoy. They are more likely to fall and get hurt. They are more likely to get sick and need to go to a hospital. When they have surgery, they often need more time to heal. They are also more likely to die.

**6-4. How do I know if I am frail?**

There are many tests for frailty, but doctors cannot agree on the best one. So, different doctors may use different tests. In general, you might be frail if you are weak, slow, easily tired, or losing weight.

**Section II. Frailty: what to do with your doctor**

**6-5. Tell your doctor if you are losing weight**

Losing weight does not help frailty. If you have other causes for weight loss, they should be fixed. Ask if a nutritionist can help.

### **6-6. Tell your doctor if you are weak**

Your doctor may send you to physical therapists. They can show you how to exercise to get your strength back. They also stop accidents and falls by getting the tools you need to walk safely, like a cane or a walker.

### **6-7. Talk to your doctor before having surgery**

Frail people are more likely to have problems after procedures, like surgery. Ask your doctor if the procedure is worth the high risks that come with frailty. If you need the procedure, ask what can be done to avoid long hospital stay or other problems with frailty. Your doctor might send you to a nutritionist or a physical therapist to work on your weight and your strength before the procedure.

## **Section III. Frailty: what to do on your own**

### **6-8. Take pills correctly**

Take the right amount of pills at the right time of day. If this is difficult, use a pillbox or ask someone to remind you. Taking pills correctly helps keep diseases at bay. Without diseases, the body has a chance of getting stronger.

### **6-9. Eat a healthy diet**

The body needs food to stay strong. Food helps the body fight infection and gives it energy. If you are not sure how to eat a balanced diet, ask a nutritionist for help.

### **6-10. Exercise**

Exercise builds muscles, which will make you stronger and help you gain weight. It also helps with your energy, mood and sleep. Exercise often to keep strong.