

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

**Chapter 8**  
**Heart disease**

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**Section I. Heart disease and its importance**

**8-1. Why might people aging with HIV have heart disease?**

People with HIV are more likely to have heart disease. Apart from common causes of heart disease, the virus itself can worsen your cholesterol, or cause direct heart damage over time. Some old HIV pills might also worsen heart disease, but they are not used often anymore.

**8-2. What happens when you have heart disease?**

Heart disease is the number one killer in the US. It can also cause weakness, pain, or problem breathing. This makes it hard to work or do things you enjoy.

**Section II. Heart disease: what to do with your doctor**

**8-3. Tell your doctor if you do not feel well**

Many symptoms can be a sign of heart disease. These include chest pain, problem breathing, back or jaw pain. Tell your doctor about these symptoms, so it can be worked up. If ignored, you might not know you have heart disease until you have a heart attack and it is too late.

**8-4. Make sure other diseases are under control**

Many diseases can worsen heart problems. These include high blood pressure, high sugar (diabetes), and high lipids (high cholesterol). Your doctor should check your lipid, sugar level and blood pressure regularly. Make sure these diseases are under control. This will protect your heart.

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

### **8-5. 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. Your heart does better if your blood pressure, sugars, lipids, and other diseases are under control.

### **8-6. Eat a healthy diet**

High fat, salt, or sugar can cause heart disease. A balanced diet can keep heart disease away. To plan a balanced diet, ask for help from a nutritionist.

### **8-7. Exercise**

Exercise helps your heart stay strong. It also helps lower other things that worsen heart disease, like high sugar, blood pressure or lipids. Even a bit of exercise helps. Any type of exercise is better than none. If you are not sure where to start, ask to see a physical therapist.

### **8-8. Do not smoke cigarettes**

Smoking causes heart problems and many other diseases. If you plan to quit smoking, ask your doctor for help.

### **8-9. Do not drink too much alcohol**

Too much alcohol can be bad, but a bit of alcohol can be good for some people. For example, one drink of alcohol per day can lower the risk for heart disease. One drink is a bottle or can of beer, a glass of wine, or a shot of spirits (like gin or vodka). Let your doctor know how much you are drinking. Ask if this amount is right for you. Also, make sure to drink safely, not while driving or using machines.