

# **The Ten Commandments of Living Long and Well with HIV**

## **by Lark Lands**

### **Commandment #1: Manage your disease. Do the work.**

Subtitle: Avoid the Humpty Dumpty Syndrome. We can't keep waiting for people to fall apart so that we can try to patch them back together. There are two parts to this commandment.

#1: You don't wait to start managing this disease. Begin now.

#2: You'd better understand what it really means to manage a disease. It's hard work that never ends, but it's worth it when the payoff is a disease so well managed that you are living *well* with it, not just longer.

### **Commandment #2: Eat what's good for you.**

If you don't have the nutrients, you can't build the T cells or any other immune cells. Every day, you've got to put in your body good levels of protein, good levels of unrefined complex carbohydrates (brown rice instead of white, whole grain breads and crackers and cookies and pasta instead of the nutrient-poor white-flour kinds), lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, and moderate amounts of only good fats (use mostly monounsaturated fats like olive oil; avoid all partially hydrogenated oils—also called “trans” fats—widely found in margarines, shortenings, baked goods, and snack foods). Wash all that down with lots of good healthful liquids (water and juices and teas and the like, not chemical and sugar-loaded junk drinks). That's the way you give your body the building blocks it needs to keep up the immense battle against HIV. And always make sure the food you eat and the water you drink is safe!

### **Commandment #3: Do everything necessary to help your body digest, absorb, and use food properly.**

Even if you're eating the right things, it won't do you any good if you don't have good digestion and the ability to use the nutrients. Many people need to improve how their bodies handle food by supplementing with pancreatic enzymes, vegetable enzymes, hydrochloric acid, acidophilus, L-carnitine, and L-glutamine.

### **Commandment #4: Supplement your good diet with the nutrients that will help you have slower disease progression and a lot fewer symptoms along the way; always include optimal levels of antioxidants.**

Research has shown that supplying the right level of nutrients in the body is associated with reduced disease progression and improvement in long-term survival. In addition, nutrients can reduce or eliminate or contribute to eliminating many drug side effects and other symptoms such as fatigue, skin problems, diarrhea, neuropathy, bloating and gas, memory or other mental problems, wasting, and others. For more details, see Treatment Fact Sheet #4, Using Nutrients to Protect the Body and Counter HIV Symptoms and Drug Side Effects.

### **Commandment #5: Protect the body in every way possible from the damage that infections cause and give the body what it needs to repair itself when any damage does occur.**

First, use the best available treatments; then supply the particular nutrients that the body can use to repair itself. In particular, repair the intestines with zinc, vitamin A, vitamin B<sub>6</sub>, vitamin E, bioflavonoids, vitamin C, and, especially, L-glutamine. If necessary, use doses of up to 30-40 grams of L-glutamine per day until repair is effected, followed by lower doses (5 to 10 grams daily) for maintenance. You can't absorb nutrients or drugs if you don't keep your intestines healthy, for which glutamine is crucial.

### **Commandment #6: Do prophylaxis, where appropriate, and add to your pharmaceutical prophylactic regimen the nutrients and natural therapeutics that help to protect you from infections, and that help you to fight them when you get them.**

Important nutrients for protection from infections: L-glutamine (intestinal, lung, oral, and cervicovaginal infections), acidophilus (*Candida* overgrowth and other intestinal infections), oregano extract (*Candida* overgrowth), folic acid (anal or cervical cancer), and a good level of nutrients in general. Remember: Your body's response to any infectious agent or abnormal cell is absolutely dependent on the nutrients needed for a competent immune response. Thomas McKeown, M.D. says "*deficiency of almost any of the essential nutrients may have a marked effect on the manner in which the host responds to an infectious agent. The same infection may be mild or even unapparent in a well-nourished host, but virulent and sometimes fatal in one that is malnourished.*" (*The role of medicine: Dream, mirage or nemesis.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton U. Press, 1979:60.)

**Commandment #7: When appropriate, take the best available antiretrovirals in the best possible combinations and, while you do it, protect your body from their side effects.**

When you reach the point that HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy) is appropriate, it is terribly important to remember that you must have good nutritional status for the body to use drugs effectively. And by maintaining the optimal nutrient status that promotes competent immune function, your body will be better able to work with the drugs to suppress the virus and slow disease progression. When the virus is suppressed, optimal nutrients will also help in the restoration of lost immune function since nutrients are the building blocks for immune cells. Always remember that virtually every known nutrient is related to some aspect of immune function. Last but definitely not least, nutrients may help protect you from drug side effects. For liver-toxic drugs, alpha-lipoic acid, NAC, vitamin C, L-glutamine, L-carnitine, and silymarin (milk thistle extract). For the mitochondrial toxicity caused by nucleoside analogues—which may, in turn, cause or contribute to fat changes in the body, especially the lipodystrophy-associated fat loss called lipoatrophy, as well as neuropathy (nerve damage), myopathy (muscle aches), pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), fatty liver, white blood cell and platelet decreases, anemia, and, in its severest form, potentially lethal lactic acidosis, a condition in which lactic acid builds up in the blood, sometimes to life-threatening levels: L-carnitine or acetyl-L-carnitine, coenzyme Q-10, B complex vitamins (especially riboflavin and thiamine), and a plentiful supply of all the important antioxidants (especially alpha-lipoic acid, N-acetyl-cysteine, vitamins E and C, the carotenoids, selenium). : L-carnitine, coenzyme Q-10, the B vitamins (especially riboflavin and thiamine), and a plentiful supply of all the important antioxidants (alpha-lipoic acid, N-acetyl-cysteine, vitamins E and C, the carotenoids, selenium, etc.) For drugs that cause neuropathy: alpha-lipoic acid, acetyl-L-carnitine, gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), biotin, choline, inositol, B<sub>12</sub>, B<sub>6</sub>, thiamine, the other B vitamins (as found in a B complex), and magnesium (See *Treatments for Neuropathy* fact sheet). For bone-marrow suppression: B-12, folic acid, and vitamin E. For kidney-toxic drugs, drink lots of fluids! In addition, to help the body process drugs, supply the nutrients that the body will require along the drug's degradation pathway (the route through the body used when drugs are broken down). For AZT: B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>12</sub>, E, magnesium, zinc, carnitine. To help the body process ddI, molybdenum, riboflavin, and iron.

**Commandment #8: Handle the hormone problems of this disease.**

For both men and women, maintaining testosterone and using, where appropriate, recombinant human growth hormone (Serostim) may help prevent the loss of the body cell mass (muscle and organ tissue) that keeps you alive, while helping you look better, function better, and feel better. Women may also need female hormone replacement to prevent worsening of PMS, perimenopausal, or menopausal symptoms.

**Commandment #9: Exercise.**

Just do it. You need to build up the muscles with progressive resistance exercise like weight training. That's what gives you a body with plenty of the lean tissue that you need for survival.

**Commandment #10: Program the mind toward healing.**

The power of the mind to boost the body toward healing is amazing. And the power of hope is one of the best tools you can have for long-term survival. Bob Publicover, incredibly long-term (two decades and counting) survivor, says it best: "*Never give up, never give up, never give up.*"

**LARK LANDS** is an internationally respected treatment expert, a contributing writer for *The Positive Side*, *POZ Magazine*, CATIE's Practical Guides, the [www.AIDSmeds.com](http://www.AIDSmeds.com) website, the Houston Buyers Club, and the Boston Buyers Club, and a long-time treatment activist, journalist, and educator. A former think tank scientist and the long-time Science Editor of *POZ Magazine*, she was a pioneer in bringing attention to the need for a total integrated approach to HIV disease. She believes that we should teach people how to live *well* with HIV, not just longer, by combining the most effective pharmaceutical treatments with supportive hormonal, nutritional and complementary therapies. Her articles have been widely published and reprinted in AIDS newsletters and websites, and described by AIDS journalists as "one of the most valuable guides to developing strategies for survival of AIDS in print to date." She is a frequent speaker at international, national, state, and local AIDS conferences, and has presented keynote or plenary addresses to many of the largest AIDS conferences in North America. Lark has given her *Positively Well* seminar to thousands of people in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Currently, she is co-presenting with River Huston a new seminar called *Living Well...Not Just Longer!!*

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