

## **ALDERFER & TRAVIS CARDIOLOGY, PC**

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### **AIDS and Heart Disease**

#### **Definition**

AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) contributes to the invasion of opportunistic infections-infections that invade the body because of the damaged immune system. Recent studies show that, along with other organs, the heart is affected by AIDS. Myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, is the most frequent heart condition associated with AIDS.

Studies indicate that a virus is the most common cause of myocarditis. Myocarditis is a serious condition for a person with a healthy immune system, but even more critical when the immune system is weakened. It causes disabling heart rhythm problems and can decrease the squeezing ability of the heart. It "opens the door" to other heart-related illnesses.

For example, AIDS makes the tissue sac, the pericardium, that surrounds the heart susceptible to opportunistic infection and can result in fluid around the heart.

#### **Symptoms**

Symptoms of heart inflammation and other problems include:

- vague chest pain
- rapid heartbeat
- overall swelling
- shortness of breath.

#### **Complications**

Complications can include heart failure and related heart problems.

#### **Signs and Tests**

Your healthcare provider will make a diagnosis based on symptoms, a physical examination, and various tests designed to show abnormalities of the heart. These tests can show dimensions of the heart chambers, the ability of the heart muscle to squeeze, and fluid in the pericardial sac.

#### **Treatment**

Current treatment of heart-related illnesses may include

- salt restriction

- antibiotics
- water pills
- bed rest to reduce the cardiac workload.

### **Prognosis (Expectations)**

The prognosis is mixed, especially with AIDS patients. Because of the weakened immune system, other infections may invade the heart, or the original infection, such as myocarditis, can return. Prompt treatment for problems such as pericardial fluid can result in temporary improvement.

### **Tips**

- Be aware, especially as an AIDS patient, of any symptoms or changes and notify your healthcare provider immediately.

CDC National AIDS Hotlines:  
1-800-342-AIDS (English)  
1-800-344-7432 (Spanish)  
1-800-243-7889 (TTY)