

# FACING FORWARD

## Pocket Guide on Aging for Women Living with HIV

**POSITIVE WOMEN'S NETWORK** has been providing services to women with HIV in British Columbia for over 20 years. As one of the few organizations serving positive women exclusively, we are a leader within the HIV community. Programs and resources are developed in consultation with members to meet the evolving needs of women with HIV.

### Talking About the Change(s)

Before the advances of antiretroviral therapy, HIV outcomes were bleak. Death after diagnosis could come within weeks or a few years. Thankfully, that has changed for those who have access to health care, treatment, and support. Though HIV is still a serious disease, it can mean a life measured in decades, not months. Given this, women are more hopeful about their futures, but want to know what these futures might hold.

Consultation with positive women indicated a need for gender-specific resource information about HIV and aging. Interviews and discussion groups revealed that women want information about the physical and mental aspects of HIV and aging.

### Here You Have It

The result was the development of a new resource, the *Pocket Guide on Aging for Women Living with HIV*, with input from women with HIV, health care professionals, and service providers. This guide supports

- women who have been living with HIV for 10 years or more
- women with HIV in perimenopause or postmenopause
- women over 40 newly diagnosed with HIV

Exciting developments in HIV treatment mean that women with HIV can live decades longer than they might have imagined. To support women in living with HIV as they age, the pocket guide offers medical information and community support, addressing the following topics:

- HIV progression
- perimenopause and menopause
- heart health
- treatment
- lipodystrophy
- sexual well-being
- violence in relationships
- spiritual health

The *Pocket Guide on Aging for Women Living with HIV* was written by Janet Madsen and edited by Miriam Martin and Erin Seatter of Positive Women's Network. It is distributed nationally through CATIE.ca.

*for women  
aging with grace*

