

Nutrition Review for Care of People with HIV/AIDS

As with all patients, a healthy diet is essential for the person with HIV/AIDS. When good nutrition is included as a part of a healthy life-style, along with regular exercise and stress management, the body's whole well-being improves. The benefits of good nutrition are many – it can improve strength, mental well being, reduce fatigue, help maintain weight and muscle mass and optimize the body's response to treatment.

In this review the following topics are covered:

Introduction to nutrition	1
Building blocks of good nutrition	1
Food Groups	1
Eat well to maintain your ideal weight.....	2
Food safety measures	2
Drug and Nutrient interactions	3
Some practical suggestions for people living with the HIV virus.....	3
Maintaining health when you are too tired to cook.....	4

Building blocks of good nutrition

The building blocks of good nutrition are made up of protein, carbohydrate, fats, vitamins and minerals. The following are key points to remember:

- Protein foods help to regulate body functions, repair and replace tissues and help the body defend itself against infection.
- The energy from protein, carbohydrate and fat provides fuel for daily activities and helps maintain a person's weight.
- Vitamins and minerals have specific roles in the body, eg., in the health of bones, skin and eyesight.

Food groups

Food can be divided into groups according to the nutrients that the foods contain. The following food groups can be used as a guide to planning meals and snacks.

- Milk, cheese and yogurt group for protein, calcium and vitamins. Choose 3 servings a day including whole milk, low fat milk, milkshakes, cheeses, custard, ice-cream, yogurt, dairy foods/puddings.

- Meat, poultry, fish, beans and pulses group for protein, vitamins, iron and other minerals. Choose 2 servings a day including beef, pork, lamb, chicken, fish, shellfish, beans and peas, eggs, nuts and seeds, peanut butter, tofu, cottage cheese.
- Bread and cereal group for energy, vitamins, minerals and fibre. Choose 7-12 servings a day including bread (wholemeal or white) biscuits, cereals, rice, pasta, crackers, pancakes, pita bread.
- Fruit and vegetable group for energy, vitamins, minerals and fibre. Choose 5-7 servings a day including all fruit juices, vegetable juices, green and root vegetables (raw or cooked), citrus fruits, tomato and all fruits and vegetables.
- Fats and oils group for energy storage (containing vitamins A, D and E). Include small amounts of butter, margarine, oils, vegetable oils, cream and peanut butter.

Eat well to maintain your ideal weight.

Weight loss and muscle wasting can be common occurrences for people with HIV. This is because the body's requirement for energy is higher due to the virus and weight loss can occur if food intake is insufficient, especially during times of illness. It is important to maintain an adequate diet that meets increased energy and other specific needs. The nutritional goal is to maintain the ideal weight and in some cases increase weight. Appetite stimulants have been successfully used in people with AIDS related anorexia.

Food safety measures

HIV cannot be spread by food or water, but it is easier for a person with HIV to get a food borne infection because of a compromised immune system.

- All fresh fruit and vegetables should be thoroughly washed.
- Only well-cooked meat, chicken, eggs, fish and shellfish should be eaten. Make sure foods are cooked until piping hot and the juices of meat and chicken are clear.
- Freshly cooked food should be served hot.
- Only fresh food should be eaten, so the *use-by* date should be checked.
- Foods should be avoided that
 - smell 'off'
 - are mouldy
 - are not thoroughly heated before eating if they are pre-prepared.
- Meat and chicken should be thawed in the refrigerator and not at room

temperature.

- Hands should be washed – before handling food
 - after handling raw foods
- All kitchen surfaces and utensils used for food preparation should be kept clean.
- Only safe drinking water should be used (use filtered water preferably).

Drug and nutrient interactions

People with HIV often need to take a combination of drugs, which may result in side-effects such as poor appetite. Some drugs are more effective when taken with food, whereas others are better taken before or after food. The side-effects of drugs may include a decrease in the absorption of certain nutrients from food. On the other hand the drug's efficacy may be improved by the presence of a particular nutrient. The issue of drug and nutrient interactions is complex. For example when taking indinavir it is important to avoid fatty foods and to drink plenty of water. Therefore the person taking the drugs needs to be given specific advice from their doctor and dietician so that the drug treatment is enhanced and undesirable effects are minimized.

Nutritional therapies are commonly used among people with HIV/AIDS, especially Chinese herbs and vitamin supplements. Vegetarian diets in particular are popular. Many people do not report their use of alternative therapies to health care providers. People with HIV/AIDS need to be encouraged to report their use.

Some practical suggestions for people living with the HIV virus

- Adults usually need at least two litres of fluid (about 8 glasses a day) each day to replace normal losses from the body.
 - Fluid intake needs to be increased to avoid dehydration when there is a high temperature, fever or night sweats.
 - If diarrhoea is a problem, the extra fluid lost should be replaced by drinking more than usual.
 - If diarrhoea is severe or persists, medical advice should be sought to avoid dehydration and rapid weight loss.

- Seek advice from a dietician early on to reduce the risks of illness, weight loss, food borne infections and nutritional deficiencies.
- Help can be given with the management of mouth soreness and swallowing problems, lack of appetite, nausea and diarrhoea.
- Eat a wide variety of foods.
 - Your body needs a wide variety of nutrients, which are present in different foods.
 - Variety also helps to keep your interest in food.
- Enjoy your meals and snacks and choose foods that you like and enjoy eating.
 - Foods cooked or prepared in different ways can stimulate your appetite and boost your enjoyment of food.
- Eat small meals and regular snacks.
 - Snacks can often help to keep your food intake and energy levels up.
- Eat nutrient rich foods.
- Supplement your diet with high-energy drinks such as Ensure Plus or Two cal HN.
 - Oral supplements should be lactose free, high in kilojoules with easily digested protein, low in fat with the fat easily digestible, palatable, inexpensive and tolerated without causing diarrhoea.

Maintaining health when you are too tired to cook

Sometimes it is not easy to buy and prepare nutritious foods when you are tired. If you are tired...

- Take advantage of pre-prepared foods from the supermarket.
- Accept any offers of helps from family and friends.
- Keep easy to prepare foods on hand such as frozen meals, canned soups, canned meat and fish, rice and noodle dishes, muesli bars, cheese slices, hard-boiled eggs, sandwich meats and frankfurters, nuts and dried fruits.
- Sip high-energy supplements throughout the day such as Ensure Plus and Two cal HN which are available from your pharmacy or on special authority through a specialist. These supplements are particularly useful because they provide complete balanced nutrition and are suitable as a supplement or a complete meal replacement.
- Order takeaway foods.