



NUTRITION

WHY IS NUTRITION IMPORTANT?

Good nutrition means eating the right *kinds* and *amounts* of food. Good nutrition can be a problem for many people with HIV. In order to fight infection, the body uses energy and nutrients from food at an increased rate.

HIV infection can cause weight loss, but the medications you're prescribed may cause fat gain. In order to prevent muscle loss and/or fat gain, you should eat a variety of lean meat sources at least three times each day (eggs, poultry, fish, lean beef, chicken, pork). If you gain or lose more than 10lbs in 6 months, talk to your healthcare provider.

Some medications can upset your stomach, and some opportunistic infections can affect the mouth or throat. This makes it difficult to eat. Also, some medications and infections cause diarrhea. If you have diarrhea (see fact sheet 554,) your body actually uses less of what you eat. This is called malabsorption. If you experience an upset stomach, diarrhea, or mouth pain, see your doctor and dietitian.

NUTRITION GUIDELINES FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV

First, **eat more often**. Try to eat 4-6 times per day instead of 2-3 times per day. This will help prevent muscle loss. Extra muscle weight will help you fight HIV. This is very important. Many people want to lose weight, but for people with HIV, it can be dangerous.

Make sure you eat plenty of meat, fruits, and vegetables.

- **Meat** (protein) helps build and maintain your muscles. Chicken, pork, beef, fish, eggs, and dairy are the best foods to eat for muscle maintenance.
- **Fruits & Vegetables & Whole Grains** (carbohydrates) give you energy and antioxidants. These are "power" foods that will help you fight infections. Every meal should contain fruits and vegetables.

- **Nuts & oils** (fats) provide energy for low-intensity exercise and normal body functions. You need some — but not too much.

A moderate **exercise** program will help your body turn your food into muscle. Within 15 minutes after exercise, eat a small meal or snack with meat, fruits, and veggies or drink a glass of chocolate milk. Take it easy, and work exercise into your daily activities. See fact sheet 802 for more information on exercise.

Drinking enough **liquids** is very important when you have HIV. Extra water can reduce the side effects of medications. It can help you avoid a dry mouth and constipation. Remember that drinking tea, coffee, colas, chocolate, or alcohol can actually make you lose body liquid. The best way to know if you're getting enough water is to monitor the color of your urine. Light-yellow is ideal.

PRACTICE FOOD SAFETY

- Keep foods **out** of the temperature danger zone—41°–140° F.
- Wash your hands often. Use soap & water and scrub for at least 20 seconds. Wash hands immediately before and after handling raw food.
- Throw it out, when in doubt—never eat anything that you think is possibly spoiled.
- Wash all fresh produce thoroughly, even those that you remove the skin from, such as bananas, melons, and oranges.
- Sanitize countertops, cutting boards, and other food preparation areas frequently during meal preparation
- Never eat raw eggs or raw fish, such as in some eggnog recipes or sushi.
- Cook meat, poultry, and fish to the following recommended temperatures:
 - Poultry: 165° F
 - Ground meat: 155° F
 - Pork, beef, veal, lamb and fish: 145° F
- Reheat leftovers by heating to a minimum temperature of 145° F
- Avoid drinking well water

WHAT ABOUT SUPPLEMENTS?

Supplements can be dangerous. Avoid supplements unless you have discussed with your doctor and dietitian. Supplements (vitamins, minerals, protein powder, meal replacement drinks, amino acids, herbs) are often contaminated, expensive, and not regulated by the FDA. Supplements could contain ingredients that interfere with your medications.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Eating healthy foods is very important for people with HIV. When you are HIV-positive, you will need to change the types and amounts of foods you're eating.

Be sure to eat a balanced diet, including plenty of lean meats, fruits & vegetables, and whole grain foods. An exercise program will help build and maintain muscle.

Drink plenty of liquids to help your body deal with any medications you are taking.

Practice food safety. Keep your kitchen clean, wash foods, and be careful about food preparation and storage. If your tap water isn't pure, drink bottled water.

If you feel you need to use nutritional supplements, be sure to get some expert advice from your health care provider.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

US Government Food Safety Information: <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>

US Department of Agriculture dietary guidelines: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>

Dong K, Imai CM. Medical nutrition therapy for HIV and AIDS. In: Mahan LK, Escott-Stump S, Raymond JL. Krause's Food and the Nutrition Care Process. St Louis, MO: Elsevier Saunders; 2012:864-883.

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