



# Nutrition



Eating Healthy

## Why is good nutrition important?

- ☛ Good nutrition is the foundation of good health.
- ☛ Poor nutrition can weaken your immune system.
- ☛ Nutrition provides the source of energy for your body to maintain its function, activities and weight.

## What problems with nutrition can people with HIV have?

- ☛ People with HIV may have problems with nutrition due to many factors, including social, economic, mental, emotional and physical.
- ☛ You may have problems not taking in enough food (malnutrition) or not being able to absorb the nutrition from the food that is eaten (malabsorption).
- ☛ **Malnutrition** can be caused by:
  - an inability to afford food due to limited income
  - poor appetite due to depression, illness or side effects of medications
  - not having energy to shop for, prepare or cook food
  - a problem with chewing or swallowing due to gum or teeth diseases, or thrush or ulcers in the mouth or throat
  - a problem with keeping food down due to nausea and vomiting
  - feeling full after eating only a little because the stomach is not emptying the food properly



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Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.

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### ☛ **Malabsorption** can be caused by:

- infection in the stomach or bowels that causes the loss of their ability to absorb nutrients from food that is eaten
- diarrhea due to infections in the stomach and bowels or due to side effects of medications

### **How do I get good nutrition?**

The food we eat is made up of three components: proteins, fats and carbohydrates.

One of the goals of good nutrition is to take in the right balance of these components.

### ☛ **Proteins:**

- Proteins are made up of different amino acids. These amino acids combine in different ways to make up our muscles, skin and hair, as well as part of our immune system and body lining.
- Foods high in protein include: red meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, beans, grains and seeds. Try to get your protein from different kinds of sources to get a better variety of amino acids.
- A healthy diet should contain about 2-3 servings of protein every day. One serving is a fist-sized piece of meat, 1/2 cup of beans, 1/3 cup of tofu or 2 eggs.

### ☛ **Fats:**

- There are different types of fats and each has different functions in your body. Fats provide cushions to our internal organs, store energy for future use and make the coat of our cells and many of our hormones. They also help carry vitamins A, D, E and K throughout our bodies.
- Saturated fats are animal fats found in butter or parts of red meat. They can increase cholesterol and cause heart problems.
- Polysaturated fats are found in vegetable oils such as margarines and corn and peanut oil. Some studies have shown that they may reduce the



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number of T cells in your immune system. They are less likely than saturated fats to increase cholesterol levels.

- Monounsaturated fats are found in vegetable oils such as olive oil and canola oil. They do not have bad effects on your immune system or your cholesterol.
- Omega-3 fatty acids are called essential fatty acids because your body cannot make them and they have to be taken in from food. They are found in the oils of most fish and seafood, and in some beans and peas. They are shown to have the good effects of reducing heart disease and improving the immune system.

### ☛ **Carbohydrates:**

- Carbohydrates are source of the body's energy for our daily activities. They can be found in simple sugars, or as complex carbohydrates in other foods such as bread, rice, pastas, cereals, fruits and vegetables. Complex carbohydrates are better than simple sugars because they also contain other minerals and vitamins.
- A healthy diet should contain about 5-12 servings of grain products and 5-10 servings of vegetables and fruits every day. One serving of grain is a slice of bread or 1/2 cup of rice. One serving of fruit or vegetable is one medium-sized fresh fruit or 1/2 cup of vegetables.

### ☛ **Fluids:**

- Our body is made up mostly of water. Water also transports nutrients through the body and keeps your kidneys healthy. Everyone needs to replace water that they lose in sweat and urine.
- Regardless of HIV status, people should drink 8 cups of water every day.
- If you have HIV and if you are taking certain drugs such as indinavir (Crixivan), you need to drink more water to prevent side effects such as kidney stones.



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- Some drinks, such as alcohol or coffee, actually remove water from your system instead of increasing it. They should not be counted as part of the 8 cups of water you drink every day.
- If you have diarrhea or vomiting, you may be losing minerals as well as water. You should consider drinks like Gatorade or other sport drinks that contain large amounts of mineral supplements.

### Other general tips for good nutrition:

- ☛ Drink 8 cups of water, juice or other drinks without caffeine a day.
- ☛ Eat more cereals, bread, grain products, fruits and vegetables; less salt, alcohol and fat.
- ☛ Eat three times a day or more.
- ☛ Take multivitamin supplements.
- ☛ Go for a walk or do some exercise every day.
- ☛ Make sure your food is prepared and handled safely.
- ☛ Talk to a dietitian to get more information on the special foods you like to eat.

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This information is also available in Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese

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