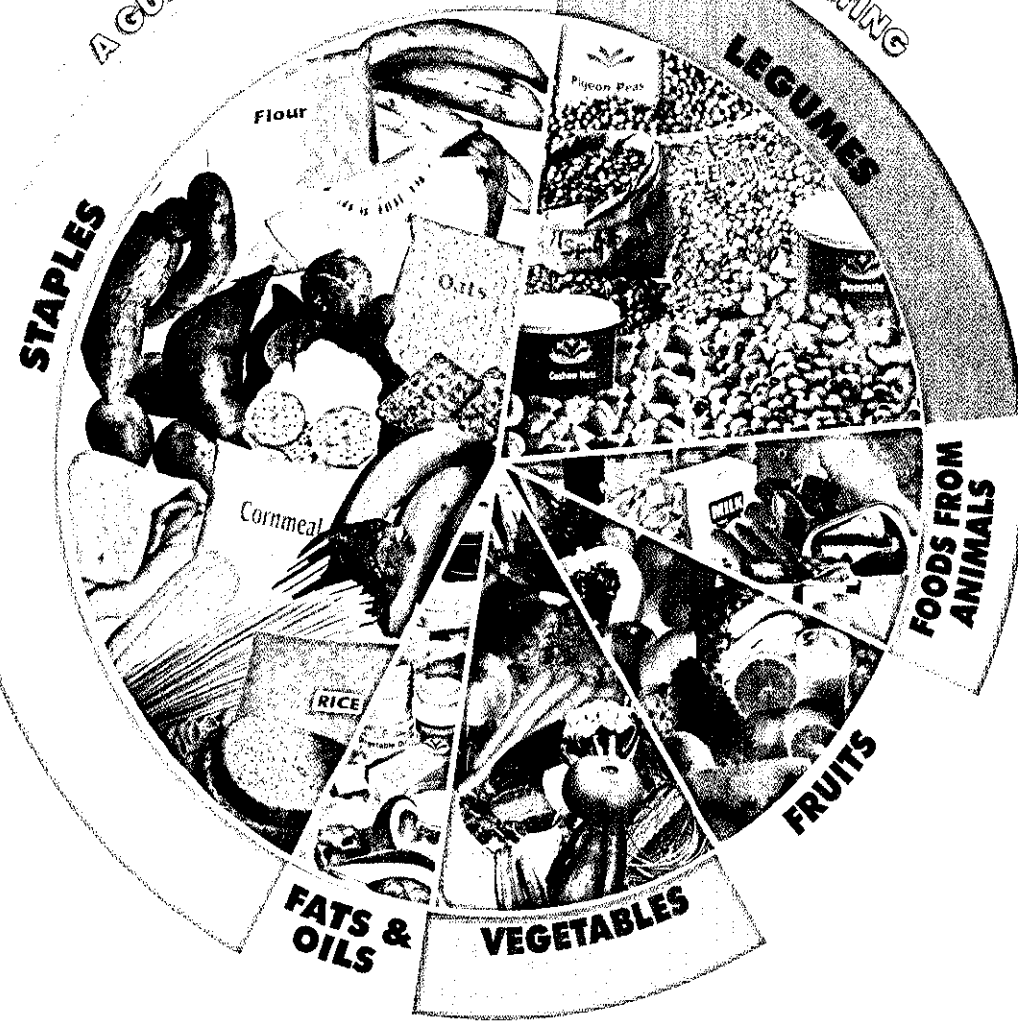


CARIBBEAN FOOD GROUPS

A GUIDE TO MEAL PLANNING FOR HEALTHY EATING



About Nutrition and HIV

Healthy Eating For Better Living

A Publication of the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI)

Produced by Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI)
A Specialized Centre of the Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization
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My Personal Notes 

HEALTHY EATING FOR BETTER LIVING

About Nutrition and HIV

A Booklet on Good Nutrition and Healthy Eating for People Living with HIV/AIDS



A publication of the
Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI)
A Specialised Centre of the
Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO)
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* Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Christopher-Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands.

My Personal Notes



Lined area for personal notes.

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Introduction

Healthy eating for better living is important for everyone. It is the backbone for being in good nutritional status as well as living healthier. For persons living with HIV, healthy eating is even more important because the virus can affect your nutritional status and health which depend on more than just having enough quality food to provide you with the needed energy and nutrients. Your nutritional health also includes using clean and safe water, and paying attention to food hygiene and food safety. Also important is matching your food choices and intake with your antiretrovirals and other drugs, as well as managing any problems that you may experience.

Since the widespread distribution of the 2002 publication "**Healthy Eating for Better Living, A Caribbean Handbook**", many users have provided us with invaluable feedback. This has resulted in the creation of 7 booklets for easier use by HIV-positive persons and your care-providers. We have kept part of the original title, "Healthy Eating for Better Living" and each booklet now has one of the following subtitles:

- (1) What is Good Nutrition for HIV?
- (2) About Nutrition and HIV
- (3) Planning A Healthy Diet

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- The result of malabsorption is diarrhoea that causes loss of nutrients and water from the body.

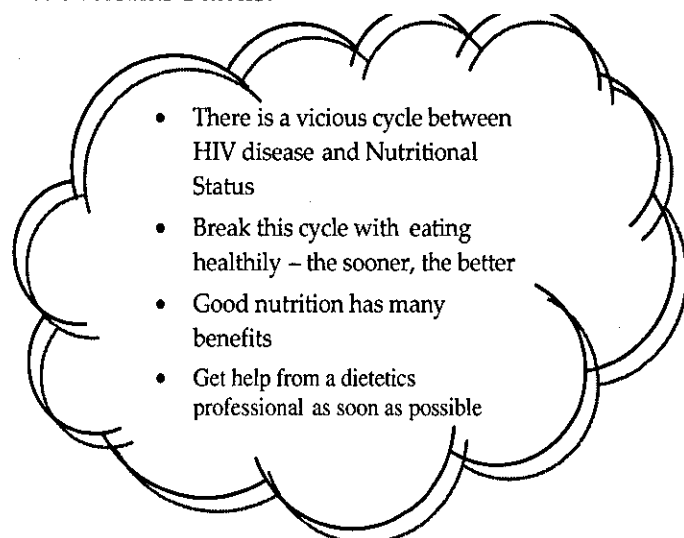
HIV and Nutritional Status

When any of these situations is present, poor nutritional status is the result. Many people have weight loss that is obvious. Other body functions and systems may also be affected.

Poor nutritional status also leads to a decreased ability of your body to cope with the medicines that you have to take.

If you have a poor nutritional status your immune system cannot function well because it is weak. The cycle begins again and continues if it is not treated to control or stop this process.

This domino effect is known as **The Vicious Cycle of HIV, AIDS and Poor Nutritional Status.**



- (4) Keeping Healthy and Living with HIV
- (5) Dietary Tips for Coping with Problems that Could Affect Your Nutritional Health
- (6) Food Safety and Hygiene
- (7) Getting the Best from Your Food and Drugs

Each booklet allows you to focus on one topic at a time. However, we suggest that you keep all of them handy as quick references that can help to make life and living better. We hope that you will continue to find the information useful. Remember that the information provided in these booklets is not intended to be used in place of any individualized treatment you will require from your doctor, dietetics or any other healthcare professional. In addition, mention of any product does not mean any expressed or implied endorsement. If you have questions or need additional information, we encourage you to consult your doctor, nutrition or dietetics professional or nurse.

*Dr. Fitzroy Henry
Director, CFNI*

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HIV lowers food intake and availability because....

- Infections and illness lead to poor appetite.
- Mouth and throat infections cause difficulties with eating.
- Some medicines affect your sense of taste.
- Eating is also a social occasion. Loneliness and isolation may result from stigma and discrimination against you because you are HIV positive. These situations can add to decreasing appetite.
- Depression, fear and anxiety can also contribute to loss of appetite.
- People with HIV/AIDS may eat less because they find it difficult to cook for themselves especially in the late stages of the disease.
- Less money may be available to buy food because of the cost of treatment (if you have to pay for this) and if you are unable to work – less household income.

HIV affects nutrient availability because....

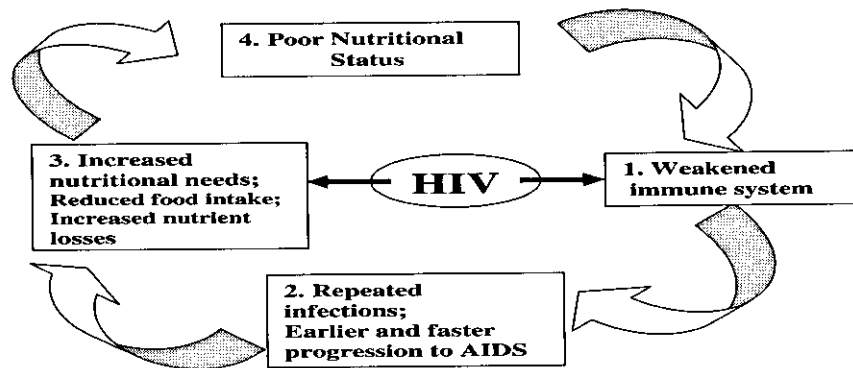
- Digestion and absorption problems are very likely to occur.
- The lining of the digestive tract breaks down due to the presence of the virus and other infections. Thus the ability to digest and absorb the nutrients from food can be affected. This is called *malabsorption*.

This makes your body less able to fight this fast-multiplying virus and it is also easier now for you to catch other infections.

Worrying about the disease leads to high anxiety. This can further weaken the immune system.

HIV, Infections and Disease Progression

A weakened immune system contributes to ill health, faster disease progression and development of AIDS. In this state,



you are also prone to repeated infections. Many of these infections are known as *opportunistic infections*.

HIV, Nutritional Needs and Nutrient Availability

HIV increases your nutritional needs because....

- The virus uses the energy nutrients (carbohydrates, fats and protein) to multiply itself. It also needs many other nutrients.
- Each new infection increases your need for energy and nutrients.

About Nutrition and HIV

Good Nutrition Is Very Important

Eating enough of a variety of healthy food is important for everyone. It is even more important when you are diagnosed with HIV, because you are at a greater risk of developing health problems if you do not eat healthily. The habit of balancing the amount and types of food you eat from the Caribbean Six Food



Groups will help to prevent you from losing weight, becoming tired and will improve the way you feel.

Although you may be *asymptomatic*, that is you have tested positive for antibodies to HIV but you have no other signs, symptoms or sickness related to the disease, you should begin to pay attention to your diet. Start now. This habit will better prepare you to fight some of the infections and other illnesses that you may get. This habit may also help you to avoid or delay the onset of AIDS or nutrient deficiencies that can further affect your immune system.

If or when you become *symptomatic*, that is feeling or looking very sick and beginning to show signs that you have the disease, you can improve your quality of life by following a pattern of eating that will make you feel stronger.

HIV-positive people have found it easier to learn how to balance their diet when they are asymptomatic and feeling healthy. Start now rather than waiting until you become symptomatic or feeling sick and unwell and showing signs that you have the disease.

Why Healthy Eating?

Eating healthily is essential to:

- Achieve and maintain good nutritional status. This is the benefit that your body gets from the nutrients in food – your diet;
- Replace lost nutrients;
- Prevent tiredness, weight loss and malnutrition;
- Improve the functioning of your immune system and your body's ability to fight infection;
- Improve the way you feel and look;
- Improve your strength, endurance/stamina/vigour and ability to respond well;

The sooner you begin to pay attention to your diet, the better your chances will be to fight infections and other illnesses that may develop.

- Improve the way you respond to treatment, including any prescribed or over-the-counter medicines and other drugs;
- Decrease your risk of opportunistic infections;
- Help you to keep or regain your body weight;
- Shorten the length of hospital stays, if admitted;
- Promote your independence;
- Provide as good a quality of life as is possible.

What Happens If You Do not Eat Healthily?

Poor eating habits can negatively affect your nutritional status. If you ignore healthy eating, you are very likely to be sick often and have a poor quality of life because of the effects the virus can have on your nutritional status.

How Does HIV Disease Affect Your Nutritional Status?

Being infected with HIV can affect your nutritional status because of a number of changes that take place. These are shown in the diagram and explained as follows:

HIV and the Immune System

When you are infected, your body reacts to the virus with a response from your immune system but the virus can slow the functioning of your immune system and weaken it.