

NUTRITION & FOOD SAFETY

EATING WELL IS KEY TO MAINTAINING STRENGTH, ENERGY, AND A HEALTHY IMMUNE SYSTEM



FOOD SAFETY TIPS

- ✓ **Avoid eating raw eggs, meats, or seafood**
- ✓ **Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly**
- ✓ **Use separate cutting board for raw meats**
- ✓ **Wash hands, utensils, and cutting boards with soap & water after each use**

A FEW REASONS WHY NUTRITION IS SO IMPORTANT

Good nutrition is important to all people—whether or not they are living with HIV. But some conditions related to HIV/AIDS and its treatment (including, wasting, diarrhea, and *lipid* abnormalities), mean that proper nutrition is really important to people with HIV. Eating well is key to maintaining strength, energy, and a healthy immune system. In addition, because HIV can lead to immune suppression, food safety and proper hygiene is a concern to prevent infections.

For more information, see the Department of Veterans Affairs' [HIV/AIDS: Why is Nutrition Important?](#)

HIV AND MANY OF ITS TREATMENTS CAN CHANGE YOUR BODY'S METABOLISM



WATER SAFETY TIPS

- ✓ Do not drink water from lakes, ponds, rivers or streams
- ✓ Use a water filter at home
- ✓ You can significantly reduce risk of water-borne illness by using boiled water for drinking & cooking

GOOD HEALTH STARTS WITH A HEALTHY DIET

A healthy diet is essential to maintaining good health across your life span. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration defines a healthy diet as one that provides enough of each essential nutrient, contains a variety of foods from all of the basic food groups, provides adequate energy to maintain a healthy weight, and does not contain excess fat, sugar, salt or alcohol. There are six essential nutrients:

- Protein builds muscles and a strong immune system.
- Carbohydrates (including starches and sugars) give you energy.
- Fat gives you extra energy.
- Vitamins regulate body processes.
- Minerals regulate body processes and also make up body tissues.
- Water gives cells shape and acts as a medium in which body processes can occur.

For more information about healthy eating, see FDA's [Smart Nutrition 101: FAQs](#).

Before you make major changes in your diet, however, contact your primary care provider, or a registered dietician who specializes in HIV care, to get a better assessment of your nutritional needs.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HIV AND YOUR DIET

HIV and many of its treatments can change your body's *metabolism*—or the way your body processes nutrients and other substances (like body fat). Some of these metabolic changes can lead to *lipodystrophy*, *insulin resistance*, and *wasting syndrome*, and can affect the way you look and feel. In addition, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are common conditions associated with HIV and its treatments. These side effects can keep you from eating or cause you to lose essential nutrients. They can also cause you to be dehydrated. Because HIV progression is often slow, changes in your metabolism and physical appearance may be slow as well. That's why it's so important to pay attention to your diet and eat properly on a daily basis—it will help you in the long-run. If you are experiencing metabolic changes, or vomiting and diarrhea, don't be afraid or embarrassed to discuss these important issues with your healthcare provider. Your provider will need to know what's happening with your body in order to decide the best way of supporting your nutritional needs. While some of these issues can't be prevented or treated with dietary modifications alone, healthy eating and proper nutrition are critical parts of the process. For more information, see USDA's [HIV/AIDS: Diet and Disease](#), or Project Inform's [Nutrition and Weight Maintenance](#).

SAFETY FIRST

Because HIV affects your immune system, you may be at greater risk for food-borne illness. So in addition to eating well, you need to eat safely. By following a few basic safety rules when you prepare and eat your meals, you can protect yourself from food-related illness:

- Avoid eating raw eggs, meats, or seafood (including sushi and oysters/shellfish).
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Use a separate cutting board for raw meats.
- Wash hands, utensils, and cutting boards with soap and water after each use.
- Water safety is extremely important, as water can carry a variety of parasites, bacteria, and viruses. To protect yourself against these infections, here are some helpful hints:
 - Do not drink water from lakes, ponds, rivers, or streams.
 - You may choose to use a store-bought water filter at home for your drinking water.
 - You can significantly reduce your risk of water-borne illness by using only boiled water for drinking and cooking.
 - When traveling abroad in areas where sanitation is poor or water safety is questionable, drink only bottled water and avoid ice or unpasteurized juices and drinks.

For more information, see EPA's [Guidance for people with severely weakened immune systems](#), or CDC's [HIV/AIDS: Safe Food and Water](#).