pozhet
HETEROSEXUAL HIV SERVICE

FACTSHEET 5
June 2026

HIV AND HEALTHY EATING

WHY NUTRITION MATTERS

Your body needs nutrients to stay strong and healthy. Eating different kinds of healthy foods helps you get all the nutrients you need. This is important for everyone, including if you are living with HIV. Age-related health problems can happen earlier when living with HIV.

WHAT ARE THE CORE FOOD GROUPS?

Eating nutritious foods from all the core food groups will help you get all the nutrients you need each day. The core food groups are:

- **Vegetables**: choose different types and colours, legumes & beans.
- **Fruits**
- **Grain foods:** choose wholegrain and high fibre options with breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa & barley.
- **Protein foods:** choose lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts & nut butters, seeds, legumes and beans.
- **Dairy:** choose milk, yoghurt and cheese. You can also have plant-based options with added calcium, such as soy milk.
- **Healthy fats:** choose plant & seed oils, and margarines made with polyunsaturated and/or monounsaturated fats.

You can learn more from the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

WHY EAT FROM ALL THE CORE FOOD GROUPS?

- Healthy food helps your immune system to fight sickness.
- It can improve your mood and energy levels.
- Eating mostly core foods makes it easier to look after your weight (both if you are heavier or lighter than you would like)
- It lowers your risk of other diseases like diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, and cancer.
- Eating core foods and being active will help you keep and build your muscle.

DO I NEED SUPPLEMENTS?

If you eat all the core food groups, you may not need supplements. Always talk to your HIV doctor before taking vitamins, minerals, or herbal supplements, because some can affect your HIV medicine.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FOOD?

If you don't have enough food available, your healthcare provider can help you find local support services. For example, cheaper or free food options.

WHAT ABOUT WEIGHT GAIN?

Some HIV medicines can cause weight gain, including the newer HIV medicines. This can happen because your immune system is getting stronger or because of the medicine itself. Talk to your HIV doctor if you are worried.

HOW TO MANAGE WEIGHT GAIN FROM HIV MEDICINE

- Make Lifestyle Changes: Eat all the core groups and exercise regularly.
- Attend your appointments with your healthcare team: They will keep track of your weight, cholesterol and blood results. This helps the doctor work with you to make a plan that is best for you. If you are still worried about your weight, talk with your doctor to explore options available to you.

HIV AND HEALTHY EATING

FACTSHEET 5
June 2026

POSSIBLE HEALTH PROBLEMS WITH HIV

HEART AND BLOOD VESSELS

High blood cholesterol and triglycerides & cardiovascular risk.

- Try the Portfolio diet: unsalted nuts, soy foods, plant sterols, and foods with soluble fibre. Learn more about the Portfolio diet from your dietitian.
- Eat less sugar & drink less alcohol.

BLOOD GLUCOSE

High risk of changes in glucose metabolism after starting HIV medicine. It means changes in how your body gains energy from food.

- Choose low glycaemic index (GI) foods like multigrain bread, traditional oats and sweet potato.
- Check your portion sizes.
- See a dietitian for help.

FATTY LIVER

- Eat less saturated fat.
- Try a Mediterranean-style diet: fish, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, olive oil & legumes.

WEAK BONES

Chance of lower bone mineral density with all HIV medicines.

- Eat foods with calcium like dairy, sardines and tofu.
- Eat foods with vitamin D: oily fish, liver and egg yolks.
- Stay active & do weight-bearing activities.
- Avoid smoking and limit alcohol.

LOW VITAMIN D

Vitamin D deficiency.

- Get regular blood tests.
- Take a Vitamin D supplement IF your doctor tells you to.

STOMACH AND DIGESTIVE PROBLEMS

You may have gas, nausea, low appetite, constipation, diarrhoea, or taste changes.

- A dietitian can help you with these symptoms.

Talk with your HIV healthcare team if you would like help with anything in this fact sheet. Talk with a dietitian to get help making a personal nutrition plan.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Pozhet (Heterosexual HIV Service)
Support, information, referrals for heterosexuals living with or at risk of HIV.
Website: www.pozhet.org.au
Email: pozhet@pozhet.org.au

Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service (MHAHS)
Information and support for individuals and communities from culturally diverse backgrounds.
Phone: (02) 9515 1234
Website: www.mhahs.org.au
Email: info@mhahs.org.au
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/TheMHAHS/

Positive Life NSW
Positive Life NSW is a peer-led and run community organisation which provides free services for all people living with HIV in NSW. This includes peer support (by and for people living with HIV), HIV health, wellbeing, prevention, testing & treatment information, social groups and activities, referrals, & counselling services.
Phone: 1800 245 677
Website: www.positivelife.org.au
Email: contact@positivelife.org.au

Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF)
Provides financial and practical support, case management, and programs to help people living with HIV maintain their independence and quality of life.
Phone: (02) 9283 8666
Website: www.bgf.org.au
Email: info@bgf.org.au

ACON
An organisation addressing HIV prevention, providing HIV support and health matters for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities.
414 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills
Phone: 9206 2000
Email: acon@acon.org.au
Website: www.acon.org.au

TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING

- **Eat the core foods:** Vegetables, fruits, grains, lean proteins & dairy
- **Choose Lean Proteins:** Chicken, fish, beans, & tofu help build muscle and look after your weight.
- **Use Healthy Fats:** Olive oil, nuts, avocados & fatty fish are good for your heart.
- **Limit Sugary and Processed Foods:** These can affect your weight and energy.
- **Drink Water:** Stay hydrated by drinking water instead of sugary drinks.

TIP: A dietitian can help you make a food plan that fits your health needs and HIV treatment.

SUMMARY

Good nutrition helps you:

- Stay strong & healthy
- Support your immune system
- Manage your weight

pozhet HETEROSEXUAL HIV SERVICE
NSW GOVERNMENT
Sydney Local Health District
NSW MULTICULTURAL HIV & HEPATITIS SERVICE