

- **Do not keep food at room temperature for more than two hours.** Be careful about eating cold cooked food that has been kept at room temperature for longer than this. This often happens at parties and large functions such as weddings. Many healthy people have suffered stomach upsets after such events. When you are infected with HIV you need to be extra careful.
- When you eat leftovers of cooked food, you should reheat them to a high temperature to make sure that you kill all germs first. It is not safe to simply warm the food up.

### Take extra care when travelling

Food safety standards are not the same everywhere. When people travel they come into contact with new germs that their bodies are not used to. Our immune systems are not prepared for this and it can be a problem even for healthy people. Diarrhoea is a common consequence. When the immune system is weakened by HIV/AIDS, it is easier to get sick from food and water that does not cause problems in uninfected people. Extra precautions should be taken when travelling. It is advisable to drink water only after boiling. Alternatively only bottled and canned drinks or water should be drunk. Do not use ice in drinks, the water used for this could be unsafe. Street foods, which are not properly heated and cooked, could also be a source of food poisoning.

## COPING WITH PROBLEMS OF HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS can sometimes make it difficult to eat. Some foods, which were eaten without a problem before, may now be difficult to eat and digest. Infections in the mouth cause sores, which hurt when eating, or tiredness may prevent eating. Anxiety and worry about food and nutrition can also be a problem even when feeling well. There are certain things that will help people with HIV/AIDS to eat and feel better when they have these problems. This section supplies some guidelines to help people cope with the problems of HIV/AIDS.

**REMEMBER:** The advice given for one problem might create a problem in another situation. Make sure to avoid the foods listed for each symptom if you have more than one problem at a time.

### When your appetite is poor...

- Try not to eat alone. Meals can be more enjoyable when shared with good company.
- Make meals interesting. Eat outside for a change, have a picnic or play your favourite music. When eating is a pleasant experience, you are more likely to eat well.
- Make food appealing. Add garnishes, serve the food in nice dishes or bowls or set the table nicely.
- Break your rules about mealtimes and eat whenever you feel like eating.
- Eat the food you like most. This way you are likely to eat more.
- Break tradition and have your favourite food at any time of the day (*for example: breakfast food can make an ideal bedtime snack or pizza*

can be great for breakfast). This way you are likely to eat more.

- Try eating several smaller meals more often throughout the day. With a poor appetite, a large plate of food can be very off-putting.
- Avoid alcohol. Alcohol will dull your appetite and rob your body of important nutrients.
- Take-away foods can be handy when your appetite is low. Take-away foods, like pizza, hamburgers and fried chicken, can supply much needed energy and protein.
- Exercise improves appetite. Even light exercise is fine. Try to take daily walks before meals.
- Drink more high-energy drinks such as milk, maas, yoghurt and mageu.
- Discuss your appetite with your health workers. Medicines that can stimulate your appetite may be prescribed.

### **Feeling tired?...**

- Accept the offer of friends and relatives to help with food preparation. Don't hesitate to ask for help. They may have wanted to help for some time, but did not want to intrude.
- Plan ahead. If possible, freeze leftovers and extra portions of your favourite foods to eat during these times.
- Eat more high-energy foods which are easy to eat. Bananas, avocados, yoghurt and nuts require no preparation and are good energy sources.
- This might be a time to eat canned foods and frozen foods that need less effort to prepare.
- Ready-to-eat foods from the supermarket are an expensive option, but can be useful at these times. Take-away foods are another option.
- If you need to stay in bed, keep foods handy in a cooler bag next to the bed.

- Contact a local HIV/AIDS support group. They may send a "buddy" out to help you and some also offer home care and sometimes food parcels.
- Consider a home meal delivery service if there is one in your area.
- Rest as much as you can.
- Remember that tiredness may be the result of anaemia. See a health worker if this is a problem.

### **Heartburn and bloated...**

- Eat small meals more regularly.
- Avoid gas-forming foods such as beans, onion, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and cold drinks with gas.
- Avoid spicy foods. It is best to avoid curries and black pepper.
- Avoid greasy and fried foods. Any meat, eggs or vegetables cooked with fat or oil should be avoided.
- Eat slowly and chew well.
- Eat long before you plan to go to sleep. Wait at least 2 hours after a meal before you lie down.
- Avoid alcohol, coffee, peppermint and chocolate.
- Avoid cigarettes.

### **When you feel nauseous...**

For most people living with HIV, nausea is a temporary condition. Infections and medication can cause nausea.

- Wait until you feel a bit better before taking a large meal, but do try not to miss out on your food intake.
- Eat smaller meals more frequently daily.

- Drink liquids between meals. Eat your meals separately from liquids with 1-2 hour intervals.
- Try to eat more cold foods. They are usually tolerated better.
- Sip cool beverages. Clear fruit juices and cold drink will be tolerated better.
- Dry toast, crackers and cereal help to relieve the nausea.
- Choose foods that are not too strongly flavoured or spicy.
- Choose foods that are not very greasy or sweet.
- Try not to work with food when you are very nauseous. The smell of cooking or working with raw food can make you feel nauseous.
- Don't lie down directly after eating. Wait at least an hour. If you have to lie down, raise your upper body with pillows.
- If vomiting does occur, replace lost fluids with beverages, soups, juices, cold drinks and jelly. **Use the homemade recipe for water and salt replacement.**
- There are medicines available to take away the nausea and it is advised that you ask your health workers about these. If you have already been given such medicines, take them as soon as you begin to feel nauseous.

### **When you have diarrhoea...**

Diarrhoea is caused by many factors. Infections, changes to the lining of the gut, damage to the nervous system, medication and stress can all play a role. The biggest immediate problem with diarrhoea is loss of water or dehydration. In the long run it can lead to malnutrition.

- Drink lots of fluids to replace the water that is lost this way. You will need about 8 or more cups of fluid per day. Water is good, but soups and fruit juices (*especially apple, pear, peach,*

*apricot and grape*) will supply more energy and vitamins. Sweetened cold drinks will supply extra energy. Jelly and fruit ices can supply extra fluid. **Use the homemade recipe for water and salt replacement.**

- Some salts are lost with diarrhoea and this can be replaced by eating certain vegetables and fruits. Bananas, grapes, pineapple, apricots, peaches, spanspek, tomatoes and potatoes are all good sources of potassium. Meat and dairy products also supply these salts.
- Drink liquids between meals, than with meals.
- Sometimes foods that contain lots of fat can make the diarrhoea worse. If this is a problem, decrease you intake of cream, cream sauce, bacon, sausage, cheese, oil (*used for frying chips or eggs*), peanut butter, butter and margarine. Remember that fat in the diet is a good energy source, and if you already have a poor intake, you do not want to cut it out of your diet unless it is really necessary.
- Decrease your intake of milk and dairy products. The sugar found in milk is called lactose and in HIV infection your gut has a problem digesting it. Not only milk, but also milk powder, ice cream, instant puddings, milk drinks and milk soups may need to be avoided for a while. Sour or fermented dairy products are often better tolerated. These include yoghurt and other sour milk products like maas and buttermilk.
- Select foods that are easily digested and absorbed. Peeled and cooked fruits and vegetables might be tolerated better.
- Eat starchy foods such as white rice, pasta, bananas and cooked porridge or pap.
- Eat small meals every few hours rather than three large ones.
- Avoid foods that have a laxative effect. Prunes and prune juice are well-known examples. The response to fruit is very individual.
- Avoid food and beverages that contain caffeine or alcohol. This includes wine, beer, coffee, tea, cola drinks and chocolate.

- In case of severe diarrhoea it may help to reduce certain types of fibre in your diet. Avoid whole wheat bread, raw vegetables, the skins of fruit, nuts, seeds, dried beans, peas, lentils and bran. Very green and unripe fruits could be a problem. It should be all right to eat cooked oats, peeled pears, apples, peaches and apricots, mangoes and paw-paws.
- If diarrhoea persists for more than a few days, seek advice from health workers. There are medications that can help. You might have an infection that needs treatment.

### **When fats are a problem...**

This is not a problem for all people living with HIV. Sometimes there is a particular problem with fat digestion. This is often only the case in the late stage of the disease known as AIDS. This usually happens when there is severe gut infection.

- Avoid bacon, sausage, polony and fatty cold meats.
- Avoid fried foods like chips, eggs, doughnuts and vetkoek.
- Avoid butter, margarine, mayonnaise and cooking oil.
- Try using low-fat milk and dairy products
- Eat only lean meat and mince. Cut away any fat from meat and remove skin of chicken.
- Use tuna canned in water instead of oil.

### **For sore mouth and throat...**

The mouth and throat are common target areas for certain infections (*e.g. candida and herpes*). Candida infection is called thrush and it causes very painful sores in the mouth. This interferes with the ability to eat and with time each person will discover which foods they can and cannot eat. Here are some general guidelines:

- Choose soft, smooth or moist foods. Mashed potato, minced meat, creamed vegetables,

slappap, pasta dishes (*e.g. macaroni and cheese*), soups, ice cream, custard and puddings are examples.

- Avoid sticky foods that are hard to swallow such as peanut butter, dry, rough foods like popcorn, potato chips and hard, raw vegetables. These will irritate the sensitive lining of your mouth and throat.
- Avoid sour foods like tomatoes, pineapple, oranges and other citrus fruits.
- Avoid spicy and salty foods. Use herbs to replace salt and spices when cooking.
- Avoid hard and very dry foods. Dip toast, biscuits, rusks and crackers in milk, tea, juice or soup to soften them.
- Drink soothing beverages like cold drinks, apple juice and milk (*if diarrhoea is not a problem*). Sour fruit juices, salty liquids like instant soups and cold drinks with gas, may irritate a sore mouth.
- Use gravies, sauces and butter or margarine to moisten your cooked food if nausea or diarrhoea is not a problem.
- Eat your food at room temperature. Food or drink that is too hot or too cold can be a problem.
- In very severe cases you may have to mash, mince or liquidise your food.
- It may help to use a straw to drink liquids.
- If your gums are painful and you cannot brush your teeth, it will help to rinse your mouth with a bit of bicarbonate of soda mixed in water.
- Talk to your health workers about treatment for a painful mouth and throat. Follow their instructions for the treatment of infections of the mouth and throat.

### **When things don't taste the same...**

Taste changes are caused by drug side effects,

poor nutrition and infections.

- If red meat tastes bitter, choose other protein-rich foods. Do not panic if your usual foods no longer taste the same. Cheese, eggs, poultry, fish, yoghurt and peanut butter make good alternatives.
- It helps to eat protein-rich foods cold. Cold meat, chicken and fish is usually tolerated better, but must be stored safely. (*See the section on Safe Foods*).
- Add flavour with seasoning, herbs and spices. Add onion, garlic and bits of bacon to stews, vegetables and soups for flavour.
- Eat your meal with small sips of liquids.
- A bit of lemon juice can help to stimulate your appetite. Sipping water with a small amount of lemon juice added to it before meals can help to improve the taste of the food.
- Practice good oral hygiene.

### **Losing weight?...**

- Try eating snacks outside of your mealtimes. Even if that means you eat 4 or 5 times a day. Sandwiches make a super high-energy snack and so does ice cream, yoghurt and fruit. Bananas, avocados and nuts add energy.
- Eat protein to protect your muscles. Protein-rich foods include milk and dairy products, meat, fish, poultry, eggs and peanut butter.
- Add fat to your food and meals if you can tolerate it. Fat makes the food more appetising and supplies extra energy. Use more butter, peanut butter, margarine or cooking oil in your food preparation.
- Add sugar, honey and other sweets to your food. Puddings, desserts, cakes, biscuits and cold drinks can help to increase energy intake.

### **Constipation**

Constipation happens when your bowels do not move correctly. This means you will not go to the toilet regularly. When you do go, your stools may be very hard and difficult to pass. This happens in any person who does not eat properly. Regular food intake with enough roughage or fibre and enough water is important.

- When you have infections in the lower end of your gut, it can be very uncomfortable or even painful to go to the toilet. Here are some ideas to help you stay regular.
- Eat regularly. Try not to skip meals, even if you are not feeling well.
- Drink lots of fluids. (*About 8 cups per day*). It does not have to be water. Any liquid that you usually drink will do just fine.
- Try to be more active. If you stay in bed for a long time, constipation can get worse.
- Listen to your body. Do not resist the need to go to the toilet. If you do, it can make the problem worse.
- Eat enough roughage or fibre. Raw fruits and vegetables are good. Whole-wheat bread, hi-fibre breakfast cereals and oats are excellent sources of fibre. Dried fruits, nuts and seeds also provide fibre.
- Add some bran to your food. You will not taste it if you mix it with cooked porridge or oats.
- Eat of stewed dried prunes in the morning.
- Avoid the use of laxatives. Laxative are medicines and remedies that soften the stools and help with bowel movements. They cause the loss of water and salts from the body.
- Speak to your health workers about your constipation.