

# ABOUT HIV

## Healthy living

There's a lot you can do to take care of your health. It's not just about popping pills.

### Eat a balanced diet

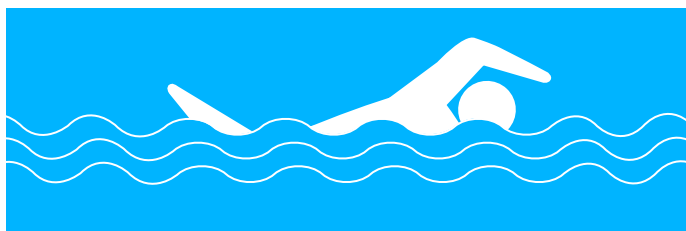
Good nutrition is important for everyone's health. Nutrition helps your immune system and its ability to fight infections. Healthy eating also helps you become and stay a healthy weight, and can help reduce the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer and osteoporosis.

People with HIV can usually follow the same healthy eating advice as everyone else. A good diet will consist of a balance of the following items:

- Fruit and vegetables.
- Bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta, rice and other carbohydrates.
- Milk, cheese, yoghurt and other dairy products.
- Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and other foods containing protein.
- Food and drinks high in fat or sugar – in much smaller quantities.

Vitamin and mineral supplements aren't usually necessary. It's generally best to get most of your nutrients from food.

If you often eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice, ask your doctor or pharmacist if this will affect your HIV treatment. Because of the way grapefruit interacts with some medicines, it can alter their effectiveness. This applies to two specific anti-HIV drugs and also to statins.



### Get some exercise

Regular exercise is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle for everybody. It can improve your appearance and increase your life expectancy. It's good for your heart, lungs, circulation, mobility and posture.

Exercise is also good for you mentally, since the body releases endorphins and other natural chemicals that make us feel good. It can help relieve stress, anxiety and depression. You may feel relaxed, energised, and sleep better.

Exercise doesn't have to be strenuous or competitive. Just a little mild or moderate activity can make a difference to health. You can start by walking to the local shop rather than taking the car or bus, or using the stairs instead of the lift.

If you're more ambitious, and want to change your body shape or increase your strength, you can try a more intensive and structured training programme.

### Give up smoking, if you are smoker

If you smoke cigarettes or other tobacco products, giving up smoking is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health.

As well as being addictive, smoking increases the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke (major causes of ill health in people living with HIV), lung cancer, emphysema (a disease which causes breathlessness) and PCP (a form of pneumonia that affects the lungs).

You are most likely to stop smoking and stay stopped if you are motivated. Individual or group therapy can help motivate people to stop smoking.

Nicotine patches, gum, nasal sprays, inhalers, lozenges, and tablets that you put under your tongue are all forms of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). You can almost double your chances of quitting if you use nicotine replacements.

They give you a small, short-term supply of nicotine, while you gradually get out of the habit of smoking and get over the addiction to nicotine. Tobacco smoke contains carbon monoxide and tar – these are the chemicals which contribute to heart disease and cancer. Nicotine is less damaging, but is addictive.

### Take care with drink and drugs

During difficult times, you may find that you use more alcohol or drugs. They may help you to forget, or to stop thinking about things. This often works in the short-term.

But problems and feelings don't just go away when they are blanked out or ignored for a while. Also, too much drink or drugs usually brings

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**A collaboration between:** NAM aidsmap, European AIDS Treatment Group, Aids Action Europe, East Europe & Central Asia Union of PLWH and ITPCru (The Treatment Preparedness Coalition).

**For more information:** [www.about-hiv.info](http://www.about-hiv.info); [www.pro-vich.info](http://www.pro-vich.info); [www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com)

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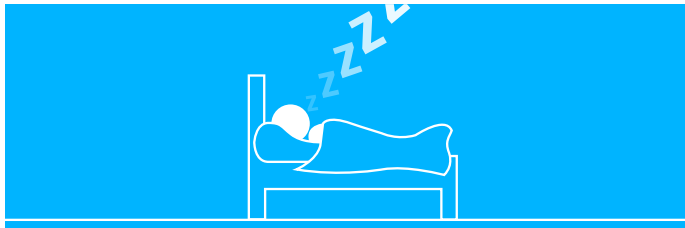
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its own problems.

Heavy alcohol use can also have serious consequences for people taking anti-HIV drugs. Both alcohol and medicines are processed by the liver; if your liver has been damaged by drinking too much alcohol, you are more likely to experience side-effects from anti-HIV drugs.

Drinking too much can make it harder for you to remember to take your HIV treatment in the right way, at the right time.



### Get enough rest and sleep

Rest and sleep are essential for our physical and mental health. When we don't get enough, it puts a strain on the immune system. We're also more likely to have problems concentrating and making decisions.

We all need time to switch off and recover from the pressures and concerns of everyday life. If things are stressful, or we're busy throughout the day, a short break gives us a moment to wind down and recuperate.

Sleep is particularly important. Doctors think it's better for adults to get seven or eight hours of sleep a night, rather than napping during the day. Older people may need less sleep. And it's not necessarily a problem to sleep less than this - if you do, and are not tired during the day, you're probably getting enough.

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