

## The bottom line: Diet and nutrition

Created 22 Jul 2008 - 11:57am

Eating a balanced, healthy diet is definitely beneficial for people with HIV. Avoiding foods which are too high in saturated fats or processed sugars will help reduce your risk of developing heart disease or [diabetes](#) [1][Diabetes mellitus] A disorder in which sugars in the diet cannot be metabolised into energy due to a lack of the enzyme insulin. Late-onset diabetes mellitus may be a long-term side effect of some anti-HIV drugs., which are more common in people with HIV. If you eat well, your diet will cover all the important micronutrients (vitamins, minerals and trace elements) which are needed to keep the body strong and healthy, so you shouldn't need any additional fancy supplements, although many people with HIV take a daily multivitamin and mineral pill.

Some studies have shown that people with HIV who are deficient in some micronutrients have more rapid disease progression or respond to treatments less well, however the majority of these studies were done in developing countries, where diets are often very poor and the availability of HIV treatments is limited, so their relevance to positive people in Australia is questionable.

There is a wide range of supplements and herbal remedies that positive people have used over the years either in place of, or in addition to, orthodox medical treatments. While some positive people 'swear by' their particular regimen of supplements, there is very little evidence from clinical trials to support their use, and in some cases these supplements taken in high doses can interfere with anti-HIV medications or can suppress the immune system.

If you're thinking of taking any kind of nutritional supplement, you should always discuss this with your doctor in case there is an interaction between the supplement and your [antiretrovirals](#) [2]A medication or other substance which is active against retroviruses such as HIV.. If you'd like advice about improving your diet, your doctor should be able to refer you to a dietician with experience in HIV.

- [nutrition](#)

### Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/95>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/122>