

## The Nutrition for Life project

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Jenny McDonald is a Melbourne nutritionist who specialises in working with people with HIV. Her work began in 1987, when she was a hospital dietician. Now she does more community-based work through the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre and visiting GPs with HIV caseloads. She runs the Nutrition for Life program.

Jenny's work starts with the impact of seroconversion. 'People should see someone when they seroconvert because they go through different processes. They may have lost weight, be eating inadequately or had poor diet before. We check to ensure they're having three meals a day and enough fruit and vegies. Then extra things like protein and vitamin intake, increasing B complex and C vitamins, and antioxidants.'

Countering the potential harm from HIV drugs is now more a part of Jenny's work. 'We're now aware of the potential for ARVs to influence cardiovascular disease. We look at modifying fat intake and better fats, without compromising overall nutrition. Someone with HIV may already be underweight. It's a fine balance.'

Jenny stresses the difference vitamins make. 'People with HIV require more vitamin B complex, which can affect your mood and energy levels. People start on B complex and come back saying they've got more energy, which stimulates more exercise, which stimulates more muscle mass. So their basal metabolic rate may increase and overall sense of wellbeing improves.'

'There's a free Nutrition for Life CD I did with Vanessa Wagner. It covers nutrition and HIV, eating well, supplements, [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., [cholesterol](#) [2]An essential component of cell membranes and nerve fibre insulation, cholesterol is important for the metabolism and transport of fatty acids and the production of hormones and Vitamin D. Cholesterol is manufactured by the liver, and is also present in certain foods. High blood cholesterol levels have been linked to heart disease and may be a side effect of some anti-HIV medications., exercise, common side-effects and maintaining weight, as well as shopping and meal preparation for people on limited budgets. It's available through GPs, AIDS Councils and Treatment Officers'. The Nutrition for Life project is in Victoria, Queensland, NSW, Tasmania and ACT. It provides free access to a dietician.

- [nutrition](#)

### Links:

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

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/88>