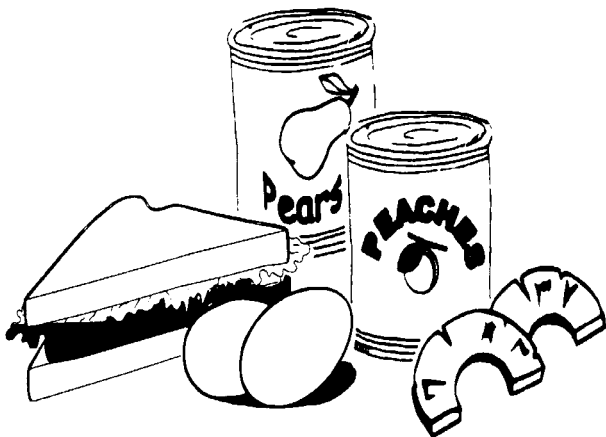


# About AIDS and Weight Loss

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## WHY IS WEIGHT LOSS A PROBLEM?

Weight loss is a common problem for AIDS patients. AIDS and AIDS treatments can make it hard for people to eat enough food.

Some people might have problems like these during treatment:

- no appetite or interest in food
- changes in the way food tastes to them
- diarrhea
- constipation
- feeling full or bloated
- nausea
- vomiting
- mouth problems
- swallowing problems

Any of these problems can make it difficult to eat enough.

If you do not eat enough food, you will start to lose weight. You will also feel weaker and have less energy. This can make it harder for your body to handle your treatments.

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These kinds of problems can be hard to deal with. There are things you can do to help yourself improve your eating.

Work with your dietitian to make sure you are eating enough of the best food for you.

### **WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE SURE I DON'T LOSE WEIGHT?**

Here are some tips you can try:

- Try to eat more food when you feel well. There might be days when you feel much better than others. These good days are a great time to eat more.
- Try to eat foods you really like. It's easier to eat something you enjoy!
- Eat many small meals or snacks during the day. This might be easier than eating normal-sized meals.
- Try to eat a big breakfast. Some people find it easier to eat in the morning.
- Try to drink around mealtimes, not during mealtimes. Try a glass of juice or nutritional supplement an hour before or after each meal.
- Eat foods that are easy to chew and swallow.
- Eat or drink high-calorie, high-protein nutritional supplements.
- Eat foods that are easy for you to prepare and eat.
- Make your meals enjoyable and fun!

### **WHAT IF FOOD TASTES "FUNNY" OR STRANGE TO ME?**

- If food tastes different or does not taste "right" to you, try adding seasonings or spices to your meals.
- Try to eat small amounts of different kinds of foods each day. That way, if one type of taste bothers you, there are lots of other flavors to interest you in the food.

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- If red meat tastes bad to you, here are some other foods you can try that have a lot of protein:
  - fish
  - ground meats like veal, turkey, or lamb
  - peanut butter
  - eggs
  - ham
  - cheese and yogurt
  - tofu
- Sometimes it helps to keep foods cold. Cold foods have much less smell and will probably taste better to you. There are lots of great cold foods you can try, such as:
  - tuna salad or seafood salad
  - chicken salad
  - egg salad
  - pasta salad
  - green salads (use salad dressings to add a little flavor)
  - chilled fruit salad

### **WHAT IF I HAVE DIARRHEA?**

**If you have diarrhea, make sure you drink enough liquids! Your body needs to replace the fluids it is losing.**

Here are some tips that should help:

- Try to avoid milk and things made from milk. You may also want to avoid these foods:

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- whole grains
- nuts
- raw fruits and vegetables
- greasy and fatty foods (like fried foods)
- foods with a lot of fiber (like corn, cabbage, and beans)
- very spicy foods (like hot peppers)
- Eat small amounts of food throughout the day, instead of eating normal sized meals.
- Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- Try eating some soft foods.
- Try to avoid any alcohol or drinks with caffeine (like coffee or tea).
- Drink liquids that are room temperature (not very hot or cold).
- Drink liquids after meals, not during meals.

### **WHAT IF I'M CONSTIPATED?**

Here are some tips that should help:

- Try to eat lots of different fruits and vegetables. It's important to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Eating even more servings of fruits and vegetables (sometimes as many as 8 servings) each day can help.
- Add some high-fiber food to your diet. Things like fruits and vegetables, dried beans and peas, and whole-grain bread, cereal, and nuts all have lots of fiber.
- Try to eat whole grain products like whole wheat bread or oatmeal instead of refined grains like white bread or rice.

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- Add some bran to your diet. You can add bran to foods like warm cereals and casseroles.
- Try to drink more fluids each day. Eight glasses of water each day works for some people. It's best to have drinks that don't have caffeine in them. Sometimes, drinking warm or hot liquids can help.
- Try to avoid foods that make you constipated.
- Try to get some exercise. Ask your doctor what kind of exercise is a good idea for you.
- Ask your dietitian or doctor if you have any questions. These tips should help, but there are medicines you might be able to try if you really need them.

### **WHAT IF I FEEL TOO FULL OR BLOATED TO EAT?**

Here are some tips you can try if you feel this way:

- Try to eat several small meals during the day. Eating 5 or 6 small, healthy meals instead of 3 big meals will help make sure you are getting the amount of food you need.
- Try to eat healthy snacks between meals. Snacks with lots of calories and protein are the best things to try.
- If it is okay with your doctor, a glass of wine or beer might help your appetite.
- Try to get some exercise. Taking a walk can help increase your appetite.
- Make mealtimes as pleasant as you can. Try to relax and enjoy your meals.
- Try meals that are easy to prepare and serve. Casseroles and ready-to-eat meals are good to try.
- If you have problems with your sense of taste, add some seasonings or spices to your food to make your food taste better to you.

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- Try to eat more food on days when you feel well.
- Eat foods you really like on days when you don't have much of an appetite.
- Ask your doctor or dietitian about protein shakes and nutritional supplements.

### **WHAT IF I HAVE PROBLEMS WITH NAUSEA?**

Here are some tips to help stop nausea:

- Ask your doctor about medicines called “antiemetics” (an-tee-uh-mett-iks). These are medicines that help control nausea and vomiting.
- Avoid eating greasy or fried food.
- Avoid eating very spicy or sweet food.
- It might help to eat small meals throughout the day instead of eating normal large meals.
- Sometimes eating plain food helps. Things like toast, cereal, crackers, baked chicken, and bread can be easy to eat.
- Try to avoid food with strong smells, like some kinds of fish.
- Try to eat food that has cooled or been chilled. Hot food might make you feel worse if you are feeling sick.
- Try sipping liquids like juice or flat soda. Liquids are easier to drink when they are cool or cold if you are feeling sick.
- Try sucking on ice chips.
- Sucking on ginger root has helped some people. Ginger root can also be steeped as a tea.
- Gelatin is also a good food to try.

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- Try to find out what times during the day you feel sick. It is also a good idea to find out what foods or smells make you feel sick so you can avoid them.
- If you feel sick when you go for treatment, try not to eat anything for an hour or two before you go.

### **WHAT IF I HAVE PROBLEMS WITH VOMITING?**

The tips listed for nausea can also be helpful if you have problems with vomiting.

Here are some other tips you can try:

- Try to take small sips of drinks or suck on some ice chips an hour or so after you've been sick. This should help your stomach settle.
- Try to eat some plain, dry food. Things like crackers or dry toast are good to try.
- Try wearing loose, comfortable clothes. Try to make yourself as comfortable as possible.
- If rooms feel stuffy or too hot after you've been sick, try using a fan to keep the air moving.
- Talk to your dietitian about foods that are easy for you to prepare and eat.

### **WHAT IF I HAVE PROBLEMS WITH MY MOUTH?**

Here are some DOs and DON'Ts for mouth problems:

#### **Dos**

DO eat and drink things that are room temperature or cold (not HOT).

DO drink through a straw.

DO eat healthy foods to help your mouth heal.

DO cook food well (until food is soft).

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DO cut your food into small pieces.

DO drink plenty of fluids.

DO eat soft foods (like soup, mashed potatoes, and warm cereal).

DO eat cold foods (like yogurt, gelatin, and some soft fruit like applesauce).

DO keep your mouth as clean as you can.

DO ask your doctor about pain medicine if you need it.

DO ask your doctor or dentist for tips on mouth care.

*Here are some foods you can try:*

- Applesauce
- Bland cheeses (mixed with cooked rice or pasta)
- Casseroles
- Eggs
- Mashed potatoes
- Meatloaf
- Pancakes
- Soft fruit
- Tofu
- Tuna, egg, or chicken salad
- Shakes
- Soup
- Warm cereal

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- Yogurt

### **Don'ts**

DON'T eat or drink things that are sour or tart (like orange juice or grapefruit)!

DON'T eat very spicy or salty food!

DON'T eat very hard or crunchy food!

DON'T eat or drink hot things!

DON'T drink any alcohol!

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