

Welcome to our second edition of *Being Well: the PWA/ACT Wellness Bulletin for PHAs*, a collaborative project between the Toronto People With AIDS Foundation (PWA) and the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT). We focused our first edition on complementary therapies and have chosen to focus the second edition on nutrition. These were the two most popular topics when we surveyed people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) in Toronto earlier this year in the Positive Wellness Survey. (Go to: <http://www.actoronto.org/website/research.nsf/pages/act.research.0365> for the full report and a summarized version of our findings.)

“Nutrition is closely associated with long-term survival, enhanced quality of life and overall wellness for PHAs”

As we did in the first edition, we will cover the topic of nutrition from the perspectives of PHAs and service providers — as well as highlighting the services we provide related to nutrition and healthy eating. We will also give you a list of resources in case you're interested in learning more about the topic.

Nutrition is closely associated with long-term survival, enhanced quality of life and overall wellness for PHAs,

yet understanding what nutrition means in practice when you're living with HIV can be very confusing. There are many questions you may need to consider: Is it my medications or the HIV that is affecting my appetite and digestion? Where can I find information about nutrition and HIV? Will what I eat have an impact on lipodystrophy or other changes in my body? Eating healthy can cost a lot of money — how can I eat well on a budget?

In this edition, we've tried to answer some of these questions. The articles inside cover topics such as HIV and cholesterol, strategies some PHAs use to eat healthy on a restricted income, and as promised, we've included another 'Ask Stephanie' column by Stephanie De Maio, the Clinical Dietitian at the Positive Care Clinic at St. Michael's Hospital. You'll find a list of resources and further reading at the end of the issue. Remember, you should always consult with your doctor to help you make the most informed decisions regarding your health.

We've received a lot of positive feedback after our first edition of *Being Well*, but, as always, we would like to hear any ideas or suggestions you may have for future topics and features.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Kate Murzin, HIV Health Promotion Coordinator, ACT
Kevin Borden, Programs Coordinator, PWA

HIV and Nutrition: The C-Word

Speaking with Stephanie De Maio,
Clinical Dietitian at St. Michael's Hospital,
Positive Care Clinic By Claudia Stoicescu

I am sitting in a room with a more than a dozen people who think cholesterol is a dirty word. On this scorching late August afternoon, the c-word is the subject of the second presentation in a series of talks on HIV and Nutrition by Stephanie De Maio, Clinical Dietitian in the Positive Care Clinic at St. Michael's Hospital.

The dreaded fatty substance, made by the liver and found in certain animal-derived foods, is not all bad. In fact, explains De Maio, there are two types of cholesterol, known in short as LDL (low-density lipoproteins—think L for 'lousy') and HDL (high-density lipoproteins—think H for 'healthy'). While total elevated levels of cholesterol may induce panic in most of us, it is only when our LDL level is high that our worries are justified. In this case, the extra 'lousy' cholesterol may be stored in our arteries, causing them to narrow and thus interfere with the flow of blood to the heart. Eventually, such a blockage can result in a heart attack.

“The solution, argues De Maio, can be found in our diets”

The solution, argues De Maio, can be found in our diets. The bad guys: saturated fats found in animal products and tropical oils, hydrogenated fats (a.k.a. 'trans' fats) inconveniently present in most baked goods, as well as cookies, doughnuts, and potato chips. Their wickedness lies in their ability to not only lower 'good' HDL, but also increase 'bad' cholesterol levels.

The good guys: Omega-3 fatty acids, the magic ingredient in everything nowadays, from fortified bread to eggs and milk. While soya, flax seeds, hemp, walnuts and tofu are all healthy and naturally-rich in Omega-3's, your best bet for maximum Omega-3 absorption is fish. continues on page 3

HOW TO CONTROL YOUR BLOOD CHOLESTEROL AND REDUCE YOUR RISK OF HEART DISEASE

If you reduce the amount of fat and cholesterol in your diet, you'll be taking an important step towards managing your blood cholesterol:

Try:

- Lean cuts of meat, poultry and fish
- A balance of vegetarian meals and those that include meat
- Low fat/skim dairy products
- Small amounts of vegetable oils
- Lots of fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- Legumes (dried peas and beans, lentils)
- Half an hour of physical activity per day

Steer Clear of:

- More than one egg yolk a week
- Store-bought baked goods
- Huge servings of meat (aim for the size of a deck of cards)



Q: Could you suggest a couple of easy and inexpensive ways to improve my diet and overall health? What kinds of foods do you suggest would be the best ‘bang for my buck’?

A: Adding a whole grain cereal or oatmeal to your diet is a nutritious way to start the day. Oatmeal can also be a nice high-fibre snack any time of the day. Try adding nuts like almonds, berries, cinnamon or pumpkin pie spice to your oatmeal for a new spin on an old favourite!

Just like bread, there are a few different kinds of oatmeal and some are less processed than others and therefore pack a more nutritious punch. The least processed version of oatmeal is the whole grain ‘steel cut’ – it takes an hour or so on the stove top to cook. If you don’t have an hour to cook oatmeal, a good alternative is a quick-cook natural oat — you just add water and cook it in the microwave. Instant oatmeal is the most processed variety of oatmeal and therefore is not quite as healthy as the other two kinds.

Adding any kind of fruits or vegetables to your diet is always a good idea — even if they are canned or frozen. Buying produce in season is usually less expensive, so try planning meals around what is in season and freeze the leftovers. Try adding a handful of whatever vegetables you have to your pasta for a nutritious addition to a hearty meal.

www.dietitians.ca

- Click on “Eat Well, Live Well” on the left-hand side menu for helpful tips, fact sheets, frequently asked questions and interactive tools on eating healthy.
- Click on “find a dietitian” to search for a dietitian who works in your area and specializes in HIV/AIDS — make sure to check “HIV/AIDS/Immune Disorders” in the “Health” section

www.hc-sc.gc.ca

- Click on “Food and Nutrition” on the left hand menu, and then the “Canada’s Food Guide” box on the right to learn more about eating a balanced and healthy diet.



Stephanie De Maio,
RD, St. Michael’s Hospital

Upcoming issues of *Being Well* will include a Question & Answer section where Stephanie will answer some of your questions about nutrition and HIV.

Submit your questions to nutrition@actoronto.org or write them down and slip them into one of the question boxes at the front desk of either PWA or ACT. (Please note that you will not receive a direct response to your question, but we will publish some of the most common questions and answers in an upcoming issue.)

HIV and Nutrition

continued from page 2

De Maio also recommends consuming 25-38 grams of fibre per day (cereals, whole grains, fruits and veggies), cutting down on red meats, and using healthy oils such as olive and canola. Of course, she also recommends incorporating exercise into your routine.

The dozen of us at the presentation who have at this point crammed several whole-grain crackers, cheese, whipped cream, and strawberries from the refreshment table onto our plastic plates begin to eye our choices selectively. If cholesterol was a foul word when we walked in, we’re leaving it behind us as we step out into the sunshine.

The Good Food Box Program

By Robin Rhodes

HIV Health Promotion Coordinator, ACT

Wondering how to get the suggested seven to ten servings of fruits and vegetables a day when you're living on a budget? The Good Food Box might be your answer!

ACT's Good Food Box program offers PHAs a week's supply of fresh fruits and vegetables at a greatly reduced cost of \$8 per box. For this low cost, you get the equivalent of two to three shopping bags full of fresh produce – half fruit and half vegetables. Because of the quantity, most clients order the Good Food Box on a bi-weekly or monthly basis, although families often order it weekly.

The Good Food Box can improve your quality of life and health by giving you the fresh produce you need to supplement a balanced diet. The program is also designed to provide PHAs with opportunities to learn more about a variety of healthy foods and how nutrition has a direct impact on health. Recipes and tips on how to use the

produce of the week are also included in the box.

Good Food Boxes are delivered on Fridays to a central location within close walking distance of 399 Church Street, which makes pick-up easy for most clients. The program is available to all people living with HIV/AIDS who are living on a restricted income.

The Good Food Box is a partnership between ACT, Food Share and Mid-Toronto Community Services.

For further information about the program or to register, contact Robin Rhodes at 416-340-8484 ext. 219 or rrhodes@actoronto.org. PHAs can also access the program through a referral from an ACT counsellor or case manager as well as through a referral from a service provider from any other AIDS service organization.


The Good Food Box

By Richard, a Program Participant

The benefits of participating in the Good Food Box are endless...

Personally, I enjoy the convenience of one-stop shopping and avoiding long line ups at local grocery stores, the assortment of fresh organic produce at an unbeatable price and the delicious free recipes included in every box!

The Good Food Box is such a brilliant program because it not only convenient, but economical. It has been instrumental in maintaining a healthy well balanced diet for me and many others. A positive attitude and a well balanced diet of fresh fruits and vegetables go a long way!



“ A positive attitude and a well balanced diet of fresh fruits and vegetables go a long way! ”

I would like to express my gratitude to The Good Food Box and to the staff at ACT, especially Robin and Patrick, for their countless hours of hard work and dedication.

Eat Well...Kick the Stigma

By Meera Dhebar

Running out of food and don't get your cheque until next week?

PWA offers the only food bank in Toronto that exclusively serves PHAs. The food bank is open on Wednesdays from 4-7 p.m. and on Thursdays from 12-4 p.m. Our registered clients are welcome to use the food bank two times in a given month.

Many people access the food bank and use it in different ways. While some people use it regularly, most people only visit it once in a while. We hope that you will make use of the program whenever you need it — perhaps when you have a difficult month with unexpected expenses. There is never any judgment passed about why you are using the food bank at PWA. We view people's use of the program as a decision to take care of their health and an assurance that they are meeting their dietary requirements.

One client recently told me: "I remember using the food bank once when I was working. I had a full-time job, but one month I had to pay out a lot of money for medications. I came to the food bank in my shirt and tie and felt truly embarrassed, but I walked away feeling good about myself because no one questioned me or looked at me like I was not supposed to be there."

Why do people feel embarrassed to use our food bank? Some tell me it has to do with stigma. Some say "I shouldn't have to use the program. I have a university education and I should be able to take care of myself well enough to make my ends meet." Others worry that they are being judged by their peers who see them coming to the food bank. At PWA, we strive to create a welcoming environment so that everyone feels comfortable accessing the services they need regardless of their situation. The food bank is run by a very dedicated and friendly group of volunteers. Many of them have been very happy

with the services they have received from PWA and have decided to volunteer as their way of saying 'thank you.' The volunteers are always willing to accommodate any special requests or dietary restrictions you may have. For example, a vegetarian or diabetic can exchange an item for something that better suits their needs. We often have tofu or soy milk in the fridge or dried kidney beans and chick peas on the shelves, and are happy to give these items to people who need them. The other way of customizing your food bank use is by only taking what you like or need at the time. We often have many items that are carbohydrate- or starch-heavy, but you aren't required to take them all. It's also possible to balance out the carbs with other choices that are high in fibre and protein.

Did you also know that the food bank always offers staples such as milk, eggs, yogurt and fresh produce? While it varies from week to week, we also sometimes offer cereal, stews, rice, and other healthy choices.

“ Clients are welcome to use the food bank two times in a given month ”

The family box is also available to any parent whose child or children live with them. This family box includes snacks for kids' lunches, juice boxes, cookies, cooking oil, flour, tomato paste, as well as dried kidney beans, chick peas or lentils.

If you are using the food bank for the first time, Luis will be happy to get you started in the Activity Centre at PWA during food bank hours. If you have yet to complete your Intake to become a registered client at PWA, please phone Reception at 416-506-1400 to schedule an appointment. For more information on the food bank program, call Kevin at 416-506-1400 ext. 633.

PWA Food Bank

By Kyle Vose

What has the Food Bank meant in my life? Well, at this point, it has been a lifesaver in more ways than one.

I am both a client and volunteer at the Food Bank. I started volunteering there because I know what it's like not to have enough money to buy food and survive on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). I know that the cupboards and fridge can get really bare near the end of the month and sometimes they remain empty all month when unexpected situations arise.

Not only have I received food from the Food Bank but, as a volunteer, I have made so many friends. And I don't mean acquaintances; I mean true, caring and understanding friends. I have learned a lot about HIV from all of them by exchanging stories and life experiences. These are the kind of friends that are and will be there for you when it seems no one else will.

I've also had the privilege of attending the Hungry City conference, hosted by the Daily Bread Food Bank. Through these experiences and others, I have learned that, instead of being part of a band-aid solution to the hunger issues, I also need to fight to raise awareness and initiate change. Thus, I have become an activist for this cause. I have given interviews to newspapers, calling on the provincial government to address the issues that cause poverty.

The Food Bank is a very important program to PWA and its clients. The people who depend on its services would agree that without it, life would be harder to deal with. The Food Bank is not a solution, but it sure helps feed the hungry. It takes

“It has opened doors for me in ways I'd never have imagined”

a lot of people and a lot of their time to make this service available to clients. It has opened doors for me in ways I'd never have imagined; it has kept me from starving on many occasions, and the friends I have made from my volunteer experience have enriched my life to no end. Not only have I been able to eat because of the Food Bank, but now I have become a dedicated activist fighting for a 'real cure' to this issue.

The PWA food bank is a beacon of relief and comfort for many people who are dealing with this disease and who are not able to make ends meet.



Healthy Eating — It Can Be Easy!

By David

Gone are the days when I believed that a deluxe pizza satisfied three of my basic food group requirements. Fruits, a natural sugar source, are replaced by processed baked goods. Why have an apple when you can have it in a pie with a wee bit of ice cream? It has taken many years to correct the habits of my youth — yet long-term health has required it.

Nutritional choices determine overall mental and physical health and have a significant impact on our immune systems. Maintaining a proper balance of proteins, fats and carbohydrates is essential to overcoming the side effects of medications, such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, difficulty swallowing and an inability to properly absorb nutrients.

Sifting through and making sense of nutrition messages can be confusing and applying that information can be exhausting. ACT's library services offer a wide range of information specific to HIV and nutrition which has greatly assisted me in making choices about eating healthy and managing medication side effects.

For me, a blender smoothie in the morning helps to satisfy some of my fruit and vitamin supplement requirements. Smoothies are packed with nutrients, are easy to digest, and high in fibre. A smoothie is simple to prepare and the possibilities are endless. A basic smoothie includes natural yogurt, your choice of fruit (try mangoes, pears, bananas, apples or berries) and a measure of your favourite powdered vitamin supplement. Or, you can try adding some vegetables to the smoothie and have a green smoothie! Try adding parsley, celery, spinach or romaine lettuce. Try a fruit to vegetable ratio of 60/40 for the best taste — for instance, four pears, one bunch of parsley and two cups of water blended well.

“Nutritional choices determine overall mental and physical health and have a significant impact on our immune systems”



If you live alone, the effort of preparing regular balanced meals is sometimes too much. Making homemade soups and casseroles ahead of time can help to overcome this challenge. Every few weeks I prepare some meals which offer variety and reduce the boredom of constantly eating the same thing. I can then portion out and freeze the leftovers for meals that are readily available. When the need to snack overwhelms, raw vegetables that have been prepared help eliminate the cravings —sometimes! Fortunately for me, recent reports indicate that seven grams of dark chocolate can be healthy because of an antioxidant thought to protect the heart. Some old habits die hard.

Interested in Learning More About Nutrition?

By Erica Lee & Lily Mac, ACT Librarians

For more tips on how nutrition helps maintain your health, have a look at these books and articles. All the books and most of the articles can be found in the ACT Library. You can also access the articles online. For more information on the ACT Library, visit us online at www.actoronto.org/library

Eating well when you are living with HIV / Dietitians of Canada, 2004
www.dietitians.ca/english/pdf/HIV_factsheet_english.pdf

An online fact sheet for PHAs prepared by the Dietitians of Canada. It gives an overview of Canada's Food Guide and the types of food that should be eaten in order to achieve a well balanced diet, as well as discusses how to safely store and prepare food so they remain safe to eat.

For the pleasure of eating: information, tips and recipes for people living with HIV/AIDS / Michele Cossette, Marielle Delaney and Hubert-Francois Legault, 2005
CIR 641.3 COS FOR 2005

A cookbook created by La Maison du Parc, an HIV/AIDS organization in Québec, to help PHAs create healthy meals. The recipes for breakfast, snacks, soups and vegetables, and main dishes are simple and inexpensive to prepare.

Gaining weight / Peggy A. Wickwire. 2005. *Being Alive*. March, p. 4-5.
www.beingalivela.org/pages/newsletter/newsletter.html

An online article which points out what foods to eat to gain weight as well as pointing out which foods will not help you gain weight.

A Practical Guide to Nutrition for People Living with HIV / CATIE, 2007
http://www.catie.ca/ng_e.nsf/TOC/393B5A1F07881968852573750070AD0F?OpenDocument

A resource that discusses how eating and nutritional deficiencies affect people living with HIV/AIDS as well as offers practical suggestions about food, supplements, and where to get more information.

It's all in the timing / Rob Gair. 2004. *Living +*. Issue 32. p. 32-33.
www.bcpwa.org/empower_yourself/living_positive

An online article that discusses how eating affects drug absorption.

Living well with HIV and AIDS: a guide to nutrition / Cade Fields-Gardner, Sharon Salomon and Margaret Davis, 2003
CIR 612.3 FIE LIV 2003

Published by the American Dietetic Association, this brief guide looks at healthy eating and the components of a healthy diet; food safety; interactions between food and antiretroviral drugs; and using nutrition to cope with physical body changes, side effects, and symptoms.

Nutrition: kiss in the kitchen / Lark Lands. 2004. *The Positive Side*. Vol. 6, no. 4. p. 6-7.
www.catie.ca/PSSpringfour_e.nsf

Using the principle of KISS (Keep It Simple, Sweetie), this online article lists food that will not spoil quickly (through freezing, canning, jarring, or drying) and can be used to create simple and nutritional meals without spending a lot of time or effort in the kitchen.

Nutrition and weight maintenance / Project Inform. 2004 www.projinf.org/fs/nutrition.html

An online article that discusses the importance of maintaining one's weight in order to prevent malnutrition. The article includes information on: nutrition and exercise, diagnosing and treating the cause(s) of weight loss, using supplements, preparing food safely, nutritional concerns of women with HIV, and the pros and cons of interventions.

Positive cooking: cooking for people living with HIV / Lisa McMillan, Jill Jarvie and Janet Brauer, 1997
CIR 641.3 MCM POS 1997

With recipes for breakfast dishes, breads, drinks and shakes, snacks, salads, soups, side dishes, main dishes and desserts, this cookbook shows PHAs how nutrition can be used to alleviate symptoms such as diarrhea, fatigue, nausea, and weight loss.

Positive nutrition for HIV infection and AIDS: a medically sound take-charge plan to maintain weight and improve your quality of life / Stacey J. Bell and R. Armour Forse, 1996
CIR 612.3 BEL POS 1996

This book reviews many aspects of HIV and nutrition, including understanding the role of body changes and nutritional requirements, working with your doctor to gauge your nutritional health, and knowing what to eat when you don't feel well. There are also tips for preparing food and recipes from different cultural cuisines.

Nutrition & Food Programs at ACT & PWA

ACT

Good Food Box Program

PHAs can purchase a week's supply of fresh fruits and vegetables at a greatly reduced cost. Advance registration is required. Call 416-340-8484 ext. 219 for more information.

Meet & Eat – Weekly Hot Lunch Program

A free and nutritious hot meal for PHAs in a confidential and supportive environment – occurs on Fridays at a location near 399 Church Street. Advance registration is required. Call 416-340-8484 ext. 219 for more information.

Good Company Lunch

A weekly hot lunch program for PHAs with limited mobility held every Thursday. Transportation is provided to and from the lunch. Advance registration is required. Call 416-340-8484 ext. 219 for more information.

Women's Coffee Night

A monthly informal social gathering that provides HIV-positive women with an opportunity to connect with each other over a meal. This program is held on the third Wednesday evening of each month, from 6 – 8 p.m. on the fourth floor at 399 Church Street. Call 416-340-8484 ext. 313 for more information.

Women's Community Kitchen

A monthly community kitchen for Caribbean and African women living with HIV/AIDS. Participants share food, stories and strategies to stay well. A partnership between ACT, Voices of Positive Women, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, African Community Health Services and Africans in Partnership Against AIDS. Call 416-340-8484 ext. 283 for more information.

Positive Youth Outreach (PYO) Drop-In

A social support drop-in for all HIV-positive youth under 30 that takes place every Thursday from 4 – 8 p.m., and another for all HIV+ women under 30 the second Tuesday of every month at the same time. There is always deliciously nutritious food and fun activities like workshops, art and movies. Call 416-340-8484 ext. 281 for more information.

Nutrition Information Sessions

Supported by the HIV/AIDS Wellness Advisory Network, ACT offers occasional nutrition information sessions hosted by a clinical dietitian. Call 416-340-2437 for more information.

PWA

Food Bank

The only food bank in Toronto that exclusively serves people living with HIV/AIDS, we are open every Wednesday from 4 – 7 p.m. and every Thursday from 12 – 1:30 p.m. and 2 – 4 p.m. (closed between 1:30 – 2 p.m. for lunch). Clients can access the food bank two times in a month. Depending on availability, the food bank offers staple food items such as bread, milk, fresh produce, cereal, canned goods and baking supplies, as well as pet food. We do our best to cater to special needs: we have a family box and baby items, and we're happy to accommodate special diets based on what we have available. Call Kevin Borden, Programs Coordinator, at 416-506-8606 ext. 633 for more information.

Food For Life

A meal delivery program for men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS who cannot shop and prepare their own meals. Each week over 100 people living with HIV/AIDS receive Food for Life meals. This is a fee-for-service program based on income, but no one will be denied service due to financial hardship. The Toronto People With AIDS Foundation partners with Mid-Toronto Community Services to deliver this program. Call Mark Gilmore, Food for Life Coordinator, at 416-506-8606 ext. 628

Holiday Hampers

The Holiday Hamper program provides people living with HIV/AIDS with a special hamper of high quality food items, personal care products and other gifts so that they may participate in the spirit of the December holiday season. Holiday Hampers help to lift people's spirits and maintain their nutritional intake. Information about Hamper distribution is available in November. Call Kevin Borden, Programs Coordinator, at 416-506-8606 ext. 633

Nutrition & Food Programs at ACT & PWA

PWA (continued)

Holiday Dinner and Show

The Holiday Dinner and Show celebrates the joy of the winter season by creating a fun social environment and a nutritious meal. The event usually takes place in December, and details are available in November. Call Kevin Borden, Programs Coordinator, at 416-506-8606 ext. 633

Treatment Topic of the Month

Each month, PWA provides a wide range of treatment and wellness information in the form of the Treatment Topic of the Month. The Treatment Topic of the Month is a holistic treatment guide that includes information on medications/treatment, nutrition and complementary therapies. You can access it at PWA's Reception, online at <http://www.pwatoronto.org/treatmentResources.html>, or by calling Rebecca Gower, Treatment Resources Coordinator, at (416) 506-8606 ext. 627

Treatment Resources Workshops

Learn about HIV treatment topics and quality of life issues such as nutrition along with other HIV-positive people. The Treatment Resources workshops provide a nutritious meal and a supportive environment to learn about important treatment information. Call Rebecca Gower, Treatment Resources Coordinator, at (416) 506-8606 ext. 627

Vitamin Supplements

PWA offers free multi-vitamins and Ensure dietary supplements when available. Contact your Benefits & Assistance Case Manager, Treatment Access Coordinator or Treatment Resources Coordinator for more information at (416) 506-8606.

Community Naturopathic Clinic for People Living with HIV/AIDS at the Sherbourne Health Centre

Free and confidential naturopathic services, including nutritional advice and supplements when available. To find out more or to make an appointment, call 416 324-4187. A partnership between ACT, PWA, the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine and the Sherbourne Health Centre.

Notes



Notes



ACT
AIDS Committee of Toronto

toronto
PEOPLE WITH AIDS
foundation

A stylized black silhouette of a human figure, possibly representing a person with arms raised or a specific pose, located to the right of the text.

THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM
FOUNDATION

A small, stylized trillium flower logo, positioned between the two foundation names.