



**The Bridging Project: Strengthening the Community-Based Response to the
HIV/HCV co-infection epidemic in BC
November 23 & 24, 2011 - Prince George**

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Nutrition and Health: Recommendations for Living Well with HCV/HIV

The Bridging Project
November 2011

Key determinants of health:

1. Income and social status
2. Social support networks
3. Education and literacy
4. Employment/working conditions
5. Social environments
6. Physical environments
7. Personal health practices and coping skills
8. Healthy child development
9. Biology and genetic endowment
10. Health services
11. Gender
12. Culture

We are complex beings, with many needs: check in with the people you are working with to help them assess which aspects of their health they want support or information about.



People living with HCV and/or HIV are very often experiencing a number of chronic symptoms, and can also be having side effects from medications they are taking.

Supporting people to be as healthy as possible can include discussions about practical things like how to eat well on a low income, deal with nausea, or access disability benefits, but could also mean exploring their spirituality, sexuality, cultural identity, or relationships.

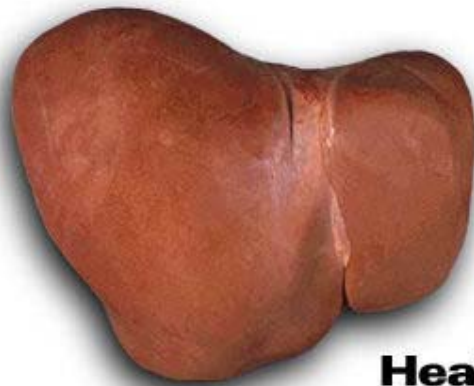
In regards to nutrition, the following are some points to explain:

- **Nutrient dense** foods include: lean meats and fish, dairy products, nuts and seeds, fruits and vegetables, whole wheat breads and pastas, and brown rice.
- **Proteins** provide the building blocks to our muscles, organs, and many of the substances that make up the immune system.
- **Carbs** provide the body with its' main source of energy. Good carbs include whole wheat bread and pasta, oatmeal, fruit and veg, brown rice, and real fruit juice.

- **Fats** are the body's major source of energy storage. Choose healthy fats like, nuts and seeds, avocados, fish oil, olive oil, and canola oil. Choose lean meat and fish, and things that have been baked, not fried.
- Our bodies are over 90% **water** and we need clean water to maintain all our body functions. Coffee, tea, pop, and alcohol all dehydrate the body, so they don't count!

- **Our brains** use up to 30% of our daily calorie intake.
- **Our liver** performs over 500 functions in our bodies, including cleansing toxins, regulating hormones, blood sugar, and clotting factors, and producing bile which is necessary to digestion. Everything we eat, drink, ingest, smoke, or put on our skin is eventually processed through our liver. Good nutrition and clean water is vital to good liver health, and therefore overall wellness.
- **Alcohol** is very damaging to the liver: encourage people to quit drinking or use harm reduction methods, depending on their readiness for change.

The liver is the only internal organ that can regenerate itself if it is damaged, but it needs to be relatively healthy to do so. The more scarring, through disease or alcohol damage, the less able it is to repair itself.



Healthy



Cirrhosis

LiverSupport.co.uk

- It can be tough to eat well with a limited income but you can encourage wise choices. For example, eating a banana or a small pot of yogurt as a snack will do more good than a bag of chips, and costs about the same.
- Advise people to look for stuff on sale and clearance, and to find out about community kitchens, food banks, and free meal programs in your community.
- Sometimes taking a doctors note to the food bank confirming HIV or HCV status, can make a difference in how much fresh food people are given.
- Encourage people to grow their own food in community gardens or in pots on their windowsill or balcony.

Food options when no kitchen is available:

- Instant milk powder
- Canned evaporated milk
- Processed cheese spread
- Single serving products: yogurt, cottage cheese, fruit cups, etc
- Canned tuna, salmon, sardines, or kippers
- Canned meats
- Canned beans and dips, like hummus
- Peanut butter
- Trail mix
- Fruits (fresh, dried, or canned)
- Vegetables (fresh or canned)/salad
- Crackers, bagels, muffins
- Cereal
- Nuts or sunflower seeds
- Cup of soup, instant noodles, or instant porridge if you can access a kettle

Coping with specific symptoms/side effects

- **Nausea**: eat what you can when you are hungry, sample dry, bland foods to see how they go down, avoid spicy foods, drink lots of fluids but away from mealtimes, ginger root helps with nausea (cook into foods, make tea, or take as a supplement).
- **No appetite**: eat smaller portions more often, try stronger tastes to stimulate your body (bitter, sour, sweet, salty), drink things that are calorie and vitamin rich (milkshakes, juice, fortified soy beverage) instead of tea, broth, or coffee.
- **Diarrhoea**: eat smaller portions more often, drink lots of fluids, try and make eating a relaxed time, see your healthcare provider for nutritional supplements.

It is important to remind people that if they are seeking treatment through **alternative, complimentary, or traditional medicines** to ensure the person they are working with is reputable, experienced, and knowledgeable. More harm than good can be done with certain herbs and supplements in people with HIV/HCV! Certain herbs are also contraindicated with HIV meds.

Suggested nutrition resources:

- Food Banks BC: www.foodbanksbc.ca
- Community Kitchens: www.communitykitchens.ca
- Healthlink BC: www.healthlinkbc.ca or dial 811
- Canadian Liver Foundation: www.liver.ca
- Dietitians of Canada: www.dietitians.ca
- Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
- Canada's Food Guide

Disability Benefits

- People are not automatically eligible for Disability Assistance because they are HIV or HCV positive, and still must first go on Income Assistance and have an application filled out by their healthcare providers/social workers/advocates.
- People with HIV or HCV on Income Assistance can apply for the Diet Supplement, but this is short term and specific to a 'high protein' diet.
- People with the Disability designation can apply for the Monthly Nutritional Supplement if they are seen to have a 'chronic, progressive' illness.

Go to the Ministry of Social Development's website and review their factsheets for more information.

www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/pwd.htm

Some other resources:

- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
www.bccpd.bc.ca
- Povnet www.povnet.org
- BC Health Coalition www.bchealthcoalition.ca
- BC Human Rights www.bchrt.bc.ca
- To find community services in BC: dial 211
- CATIE www.catie.ca
- BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS
www.cfenet.ubc.ca
- The Body www.thebody.com

Other wellness needs can include:
having a healthcare provider that you see regularly

stretching

exercise/walking

enough sleep

disease prevention/harm reduction

safe shelter

fresh air **sexual expression**

access to showers/baths

warm clothes

sunlight

Going to the dentist

A few words about stress:



Unhealthy ways of coping with stress can include: drinking/drugging too much, overeating or under eating, sleeping too much, or not being able to sleep/rest/relax at all, zoning out for hours with TV, computer, or video games, withdrawal from friends, family, and usual activities, procrastinating, or, filling up every minute of the day so they are too busy to think, taking stress out on others (anger, violence, lashing out, yelling)...

Healthier ways to cope with stress can include:

walking/exercising/doing yoga/meditating

being outside/in nature

chatting with a good friend/visiting someone

writing in a journal/being creative

going to a support group

taking a long bath/shower

playing/having fun/having a laugh

physical comfort such as massage/cuddles/sex

listening to or playing music/singing/dancing

Work with your clients to help them identify and commit to what works for them to reduce stress in their lives. Remind them (and yourself!) that nurturing stress reduction is a necessity, not a luxury.

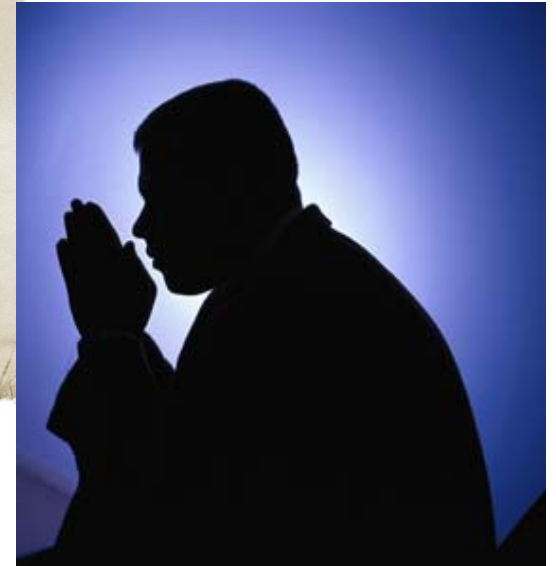
How we think can have a profound effect on our emotional and physical well-being. Every time we think a negative/stress-filled thought, our body reacts as if it is a 'real' stress/danger situation, releasing adrenaline and then cortisol, which over the long term can cause depression and anxiety, and has been linked to cancer and some chronic conditions.

Take a big, deep breath and relax.



How people feel about their health is very often linked to their self esteem and sense of worth... encourage and support your clients to examine the beliefs they hold about themselves and what it means to them to be HIV

For many, spiritual practices help make life meaningful, and can be an important part of health and having a positive sense of self.



Feeling connected to their culture and family traditions can be very important and meaningful too.



- **Stigma** is fuelled by fear, misinformation, assumptions, moral judgements, and discrimination.
- **Hepatitis C and HIV are highly stigmatized diseases.**
- Living with **stigma** and **discrimination** can affect a person's quality of life, self esteem, confidence, and mental health, and may affect their decisions about accessing healthcare and going for testing and treatment.

- Support groups are a great place to find community and friendship.
- Self-care education, opportunities to share personal experience, and building community are great self esteem builders and help diminish shame and distress.
- It is important for people to know that **discrimination against someone because of their HCV or HIV status, real or assumed, is against the law.**

A little reminder:

HIV and HCV positive people are entitled to free hepatitis A and B vaccinations, as well free flu shots and the pneumococcal vaccine if they want them.

Questions?

Comments?