

Nutrition and HIV/AIDS

Introduction

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has a significant impact on nutritional status. HIV/AIDS causes reduced food intake, mal-absorption and increased demand for nutrients in PLWHA. As a result malnutrition occurs. Malnutrition, in turn, impairs the immune system leading to opportunistic infections and less food intake. Malnutrition in PLWHA manifests itself in weight loss, muscle wasting, mineral and vitamin deficiencies, reduced immune competence and increased susceptibility to infection. When a person with malnutrition acquires HIV, the progression to AIDS is faster compared to that in a well-nourished person.

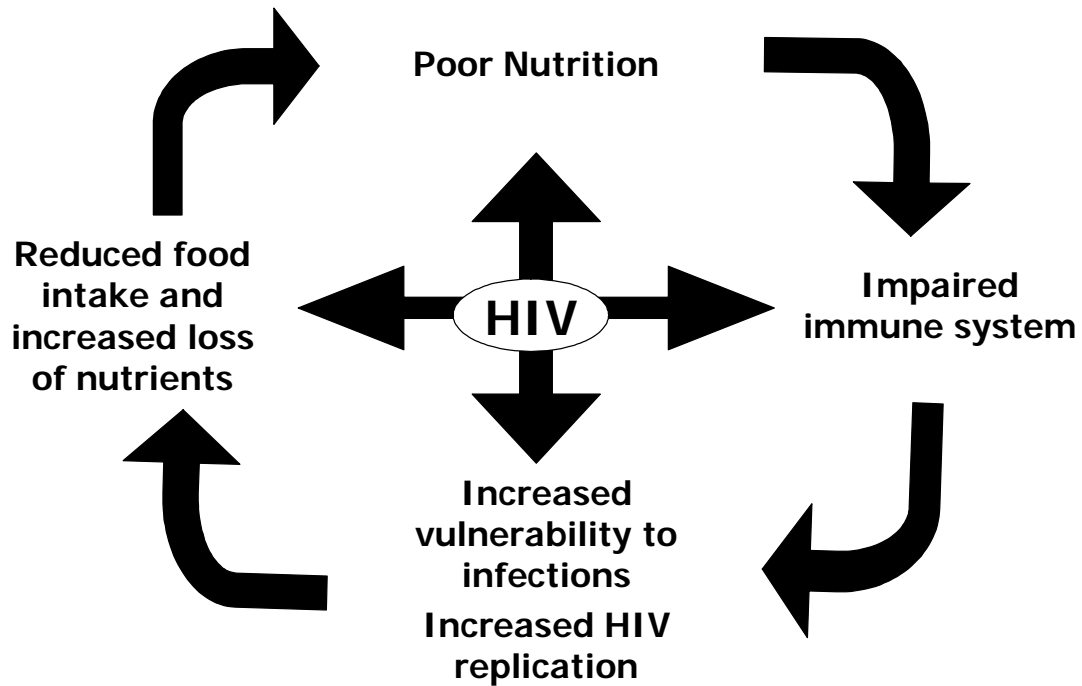
Timely improvement in nutritional status can help strengthen the immune system, thereby loss of weight and lean body mass and delaying disease progressing, so that HIV has less chance to develop in a person who is well nourished nutritional care and support helps people living with HIV to manage HIV-related complications, promote good response to medical treatment and improves the person's quality of life by maintaining, strength, comfort, level of functioning and human dignity. Nutritional care and support is especially effective for those HIV-positive people who have not yet progressed to the stage requiring ARV treatment

The current intervention to people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) is both medication and dietary therapies. The medicines commonly used include or ARV or HAART and are found in private pharmacies, consultant hospitals and to a large extent in PMTCT sites. These medications need to be administered with adequate information on nutritional care and support that is vital to PLWHA.

Prevention of MTCT requires deliberate efforts to increase access to antenatal care, counseling on feeding options for HIV positive mothers. It is important therefore that HIV positive mothers are counseled and given consistent and appropriate information on how best to feed their babies. In order to achieve this there is a need to update the knowledge and skills of the care providers who deal with counseling of HIV positive mothers on infant feeding and HIV.

Realizing the contribution of nutrition in the care of people living with HIV/AIDS Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre has seen the importance of updating the knowledge of health care providers, Home based care providers and the community at large on Nutrition in the context of HIV/AIDS through this website.

The relationship between nutrition and HIV/AIDS



Common HIV/AIDS Complications

- Diarrhoea and fat malabsorption
- Poor appetite and taste changes
- Sore mouth, throat and thrush
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fever
- Heartburn and peptic ulcers
- Weight loss
- Anaemia
- Constipation
- Tuberculosis (TB)

Balanced meal

Eating variety of foods is very important for PLHA. Balanced diet comes from eating at least one food from each of the following food groups.

- Cereals, cooking bananas, roots and tubers
- Pulses, nuts and foods of animal origin
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Oils, Fats and Sugars

NB: water not regarded as food but it is an important part of the meal

Improving diet for PLWHA

Mashing or grinding food:

Facilitates swallowing, digestion and absorption of nutrients

Use of nutrient dense foods:

Such as grounded nuts, milk, fats and oils, honey, coconut milk and eggs will enrich the meals.

Use of fermented foods:

Can be easily digested and absorbed in larger quantities. Facilitate digestion and absorption of other foods as well. Eg - sour milk (yoghurt) and togwa.

Use of germinated or sprouted foods:

can be easily digested and absorbed in larger quantities. They also facilitate digestion and absorption of other foods.

grains (maize, millet and sorghum) can be germinated. Pulses (beans, peas, can be sprouted.

Use of spices:

Spices such as cinnamon, garlic, cardamom and ginger can stimulate appetite and facilitate digestion and absorption of nutrients.

Steaming:

Helps in the retaining some nutrients for example, vegetables such as leafy vegetables, carrots, sweet-pepper and egg-plant.

Food and Water safety and Personal Hygiene

- Personal hygiene
- Hygiene of the utensils
- Hygiene in the place where food is prepared

General principles in meeting nutritional needs of PLWHA

- Eat small meals frequently
- Drink clean and safe water; drink plenty of fluids
- Avoid smoking and alcohol
- Be physically active

Other Nutrition support Services for PLWHA

1. Nutrition education

Is a group of communication-based activities that are initiated for achieving a voluntary change in nutrition related behavior with the aim of improving the nutritional status of the target group

2. Nutrition counseling

Important to PLHA to enable them make appropriate food, behavior and other social choices in various situations.

3. Monitoring of the nutritional status

Include clinical assessment, measurement of dietary intake, biochemical measurement and anthropometrics

4. Fighting stigma and discrimination

Sensitize the community to understand how HIV is infected

Empower PLHA economically Encourage PLHA to join networks of HIV positive people

5. Exercises

Benefits of Good Nutrition

