

POSITIVE VOICES - January 2012

Your Newsletter by Positive People for Positive People

Client's Stories

This month two very special women decided to share their stories with us. Hopefully in the months to come we will hear from others with something they too would like to share with us.

Seeing "Crystal" Clear Now

For 39 years I struggled with drug addiction and lived the lifestyle many addicted women live. Because I was aware of my risky behavior, I got tested for HIV regularly. My last negative test was I in the fall of 2008; I was arrested a few months later and subsequently incarcerated for the next eight-months. In September of 2009 I was getting ready to be released from jail and decided to have an HIV test on my way out: I was Positive... Even though I had engaged in risky behaviors for years, I was overwhelmed as reality dawned on me. I racked my brain trying to pinpoint the exact moment I'd been infected. Ultimately I realized how I got it was not so important as how I was going to live now- I started rethinking my priorities.

When I got home I paid a visit to STAP to learn as much as I could about this disease. They helped me find a doctor and a mental health counselor, and hooked me up with a nutritionist. I joined a recovery group and kept doing the next "right thing." I quit smoking and even started exercising. Several months later my doctor recommended adding HIV meds; having committed to the best health possible, I agreed.

Last year I went to STAP's Annual Journeys Retreat for clients and had a wonderful time. Encouraged, I became a regular at the Friends Dinners and support group; the friendships I've made sustain and enrich me.

As difficult as it may be to believe, having HIV has been a blessing in disguise- a real wake-up call. Today, I am living the life I always wanted; I am a better person and am generally happy. I don't know what the future holds, so I focus on living well today (and hopefully many days to come.) I have so much to be grateful for...

My Story - part one

Hello, my name is Mo and I'm a 37 year old Mom with 3 daughters and I have AIDS. I would like to share my story with you.

For some of us we may not know "the Who", "the What", "the Where" or "the Why" - but for me it is the other way around because I know the who, where and the what; I just can't understand the why and at times that is what makes it harder for me.

I met "him" when I was still just a kid, only 16 and we were both away from home at school. After school we stayed together, as much as we could living in two different states; I lived in New Jersey and him in NYC. Over time I moved to NYC so we could live together and we had our first child when I was 19. We stayed together until 2 months before my 23rd birthday, that is when his cousin came to our place after my day at work to tell me that he had been seeing someone else (on the side so to speak). When I confirmed that it was true I moved out, one of our friends sublet his apartment to me. Now I'm 22 with my first real apartment, working at a good job and I'm free - What could be better? Don't get me wrong, I loved him - but he came with a lot of baggage and now I did not have to put up with all that crap any more. We were young and he liked to party and hang out all the time. He would always say "I only have one life to live" - little did he know he may have been living that "one life", but he would end up taking three others along the way.

I had been in my new place for almost a month when I took a home pregnancy test and the results were positive, I was pregnant. I go to the doctor and it is confirmed that I am with child. I am told I need to speak with a Counselor to go over paperwork and "stuff" like that. We complete all the paperwork and then she starts talking to me about this HIV test and what it is all about. I'm sitting there wondering why she is telling me this and wishing she would just get to the point - did she think I had this? I let her finish, then told her that I didn't need the test because me and the father had been together for several years at this point. She talks some more then gives me something to read and leaves the room. I sit there and read it - most of it did not apply to me until I got to the part about "Do you know what your partner has been up to?" When she returned I told her I would take the test, but in my heart I kept saying that he told me she was the only one, we were no longer together so I had nothing to worry about.

Two weeks later I return for my appointment with the counselor and I am put in this small room to wait. She finally comes into the room and all I seem to remember is her taking my hands into hers. She never even opens the folder she came in with. She looks at me and tells me that my HIV test has come back and I am HIV positive. I don't know how long I sat there crying, but she never left me nor did she let go of my hands. She just talked to me and I don't remember any of what she said. When I got up to leave she hugged me and told me that I would have to go on medicine. I remember making it home still crying and not caring. All I could think about was how my life was over and that I had less than a week before my 23rd birthday - this was some gift he gave me. I don't remember how many days I stayed in my apartment crying before I went to tell my family.

- to be continued.

ON GOING MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Join/ Attend: Consumer Advisory Committee [CAC] Meetings

The STAP Consumer Advisory Committee is a committee facilitated by and made up of consumers (STAP clients) who welcome other consumers and their significant others, caretakers and family members to join them on the second Tuesday of each month. This collaborative effort provides a confidential space for clients to make recommendations regarding STAP client services and other programs in a non-judgmental environment. The meetings are held following the Friends Dinner @ 5:45 at Trinity Memorial Church (on the corner of Main & Oak Streets) in downtown Binghamton. Call 1-800-333-0892 for directions or more details. If you cannot attend these meetings, mail your opinions or suggestions to STAP, 122 Baldwin Street, Johnson City, 13790, Attention CAC. CAC is encouraging consumers in other counties to organize monthly meetings in their area.

* February 14th is our next meeting.

Emergency Pet Fund

Our “Bottle Drive” is continuing to raise funds for the Emergency Pet Fund to assist clients with medical expenses to save their dear pet or to help provide for humane end of life expenses.

Bottles and cans can be dropped off at the “Friend’s Dinner” or at STAP offices. Please make sure that the bags ONLY have bottles or cans - we have also gotten some household garbage be accident. We also accept gift or financial donations for this cause, just be sure to make note that they are for “The Emergency Pet Fund”.

THANK YOUS!

We would like to Thank everyone who has helped out, and a special Thanks to our “core” regulars who are helping us stay strong with all their efforts.

Brian Wieder, Maureen Minney & Family, Thomas Kreith, Marg Redman, Eddie & Bill, Mary Barton, Brian Barton, Kathy Barton, Edna & Sally, Rose Wilcox, Evie Lynch, B.J. Fischer, Will Zytka, Randy, Dana, John and all the Staff at STAP.

This month I included 2 “Client Stories” that were sent in to share with everyone.

THANKS, and please keep them coming.

Blogging Anyone???

Anyone interested in blogging messages is welcome to join in at thecubebinghamton.tumblr.com or contact Noah@thecubebinghamton.org for more information.

Friends Who Care Support Groups

Broome County: Friends Who Care meets every Tuesday at 3 pm - 4:30 pm at Trinity Memorial Church located at 44 Main St. in Binghamton... come join us for Binghamton's HIV/AIDS Support Group ******(open to clients only). Also stay for a good (free) meal afterwards at the "Friends Dinner".

Chemung County: Men Living with HIV Support Group; 2nd Monday of each month; 6-7:30pm; Ivy Clinic, 600 Ivy St., Suite 206, Elmira. For more information people can contact me via phone or email. Lynn Bassler, LMSW Treatment Adherence Counselor, Ivy Clinic, 737-8188.

Tompkins County: The IVY Clinic is pleased to let all HIV+ men in the Ithaca and surrounding area know there is a support group that is held the third Tuesday of every month at the Ithaca STAP office. Time for the group is 6-7:30 pm and topics vary from month to month. If you are interested in attending please e-mail Shannon Sprague at ssprague@aomc.org for further information.

Tompkins County: A NEW support group open to **ALL** HIV+ clients of STAP is starting in Ithaca. The first group meeting will be on December 1st from 1:00-2:00PM at the Ithaca office, and the 1st Thursday of the every month thereafter. Please call Autumn Cook, STAP Medical Advocate at 607-426-9445 for more information.

Dragon Slayers: Hepatitis C and Co-Infection Support Group. Meetings at 6:00 - 7:00PM on alternate Tuesdays at Trinity M, 44 Main Street, Oak Street Entrance in Binghamton. For information, call (607)798-1706.

Friends Dinner

Friends meet every Tuesday evening for a time of fellowship and good food. Join us at Trinity Memorial Church (on the corner of Main & Oak Streets) in downtown Binghamton. Doors open at 5PM and dinner is served @ 5:30. No charge, just come with a smile and a friendly attitude - ready to meet and greet friends and have a hearty meal. Parking is available on Oak Street behind the Church Annex. Use the Oak Street entrance for the cafeteria. Free bus passes are available for STAP clients! Call your case manager for details. Bus passes available for transportation to/from the Friends Dinner only. For more information call STAP, Johnson City and they will get you in touch with Bill.

Free Anonymous Rapid HIV Testing

Walk-in *Anonymous* testing is available in our STAP Johnson City office every Monday from 1:00-4:30PM and Thursdays from 1:00-3:00PM. *Confidential* testing is available in our STAP Johnson City office Thursdays from 9:00AM - 12:00PM. STAP's office is located at 122 Baldwin Street Johnson City, NY 13790. Walk-in *Anonymous* Testing is also available at STAP's Ithaca office located at 501 S. Meadow Street, Ithaca, NY 14850 on Tuesdays from 9:00AM-11:30AM, and *Confidential* testing can be scheduled Thursdays, 9:00AM-11:30AM. For more information and other testing opportunities available throughout the month, please call (607)798-1706.

Free EDUCATIONAL Lunch/Dinner :

Monday, February 27th will be our next “EDUCATIONAL LUNCH” and it will be held again at Grande’s on Upper Front Street at 12 noon. Keep in mind that you need to R.S.V.P. with Martha (607) 238-8350 to save a seat for you and a guest; if you have any questions, she will be happy to help you. Seating is limited to the first 30 people and she needs to know who will attend at least a week in advance. * You must provide your own transportation to and from this event.

Tax Season Is Here:

In the next few weeks you will be receiving any number of documents related to your specific tax situation - this can become confusing. The “Good News” is that Cynthia Knight will be available to help us out with our taxes again this year. She has been a volunteer for STAP for several years and has helped so many with all our “special needs” when it comes to doing our taxes correctly. With that being said, she has asked me to remind all seeking assistance to **PLEASE contact her as early as possible.**

You can contact Candace @ STAP or by email at : cphelan@stapinc.org

You can contact Cyndi by email at : cknight1957@gmail.com or ask Candace to get you in contact with her by phone. Keep in mind she provides this service at “no charge” to clients.

Ask The Medical Advocates

**Do you know what C.H.O.I.C.E.S. is?

C.H.O.I.C.E.S. is a self-paced educational series designed specifically for YOU to learn and understand HIV and your body. Whether you take one quick course or decide to go through the entire program and take charge of YOUR HIV, ask a Medical Advocate about C.H.O.I.C.E.S. today...

This program can help you by:

- Answering general questions or concerns regarding HIV
- Help you better manage side effects of your HIV medications
- Alleviate concerns about interactions between your HIV meds and other meds that you take
- Help you better understand the results of your blood work or other lab tests
- Learn how to reduce HIV exposure risks for your negative partners

Medical Advocacy Coordinator: Stacy #798-1706 Ext. 210

Medical Advocate: Autumn #280-8322

* Every 3rd Tuesday of the month at 5 pm - just before the Friends Dinner come join us for our monthly CHOICES module. (open to all) We have found that we get more out of the program when we learn the modules as a group. Informative questions and discussions are raised.

* Next Program will be February 21st at 5 pm with Autumn in the dining room at Trinity Church. Followed with a free dinner prepared by one of the local churches that supports our "Friend's Dinner".

Outsmarting HIV with Healthy Eating

Positively Aware online, Jan. 2012

Living with a chronic illness like HIV can present certain nutritional challenges. Without effective HIV medication treatment, replicating virus can tax the body, destroying lean body mass and impairing immune function and quality of life.

While this destruction of lean tissue can be controlled with effective HIV antiretroviral combination therapy, other challenges like fat accumulation and increases in lipids (cholesterol and triglycerides) and/or insulin resistance may arise in some patients after treatment initiation. Although limited research has been done on the effects of nutritional approaches on pre- and post-HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy) metabolic issues, general suggestions can be extracted from studies regarding other conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity. These suggestions are aimed at helping the body deal with the effects of HIV or its medications on metabolism, body shape, and quality of life as we live longer with HIV.

The components of whole food.

Foods are made up of many different components—some are “micro” or smaller quantity nutrients, like vitamins, and some are “macro” or larger quantity nutrients. The three macro groups that compose the majority of our diets are carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. These three units are the basic materials that fuel our activities and metabolism and maintain body composition. Selecting the best sources and amounts of these three macronutrients may help to minimize metabolic disorders (such as high cholesterol and blood sugar) and prevent loss of lean body mass and accumulation of body fat.

The best carbohydrates.

Carbohydrates provide our body’s main source of quick energy. After carbohydrates are digested and after some processing by the liver, they are released into the bloodstream as a sugar called glucose to be delivered to the cells.

Throughout the majority of the last million years of our evolution, the human diet consisted of animal carcasses, some seeds, nuts, and fibrous vegetable and fruit carbohydrate sources that are generally nutrient-rich with lots of water, but are not calorie-dense like processed foods of today. The majority of these carbohydrate sources are vegetables, leaves, roots, and fruits (all rich in fiber). Because vegetable fiber tends to slow down digestion, a majority of the carbohydrates in these foods are absorbed relatively slowly, inducing less blood sugar (glucose) and insulin spikes than processed sweets that contain no fiber. Some people call these “slow carbs.”

It was only after the advent of agriculture that human beings were introduced to higher intakes of grains as carbohydrate sources. Higher intakes of grains deliver lots of calories. Additionally, some grains deliver their sugar energy relatively quickly, especially if the grain is milled (which removes the fiber that slows down sugar absorption), as are the grains in breads and pasta. Unless you are very active and exercise enough to metabolize nutrients more rapidly, this quick glucose release into the bloodstream can create a dysfunctional hormonal environment that can ultimately promote obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. This hormonal shift also has a profound effect on lean body mass and fat metabolism, and possibly immune function. The key hormone involved in this problem is called insulin, produced by an organ called the pancreas.

Insulin and insulin resistance.

The hormone insulin is produced by the pancreas to control blood sugar and store it in muscles for later use as glycogen. Insulin's main job in the body is to promote the delivery of sugar energy as glucose to cells. When a small amount of glucose is delivered into the bloodstream, a small amount of insulin is produced by the pancreas to accompany it. When there is a large amount of glucose, the pancreas works to produce a large amount of insulin to facilitate its delivery so that cells can take in as much glucose as possible. Extra glucose that cannot be taken in by the cells circulates in the bloodstream and can be toxic to brain cells, so under normal circumstances, most of it is soon converted into triglycerides (fat) in the liver to be stored for later use. But we have to be careful with high blood levels of triglycerides, since they are what feed fat cells.

The correct amount of carbohydrate sources will provide enough sugar to give a healthy amount of glucose to the cells, but not too much at once. Thus, levels of glucose and insulin in the bloodstream are not unusually elevated for any long period of time. The pancreas works, but it is not overworked trying to keep up with an unusual demand for insulin. However, in the U.S., much of the diet consists not only of large amounts of high-calorie carbohydrate sources, but also of carbohydrates from sweets and sodas, which are very concentrated sources of sugar. The net effect that intake of these calorie-dense carbohydrate foods creates is a bloodstream that is occasionally flooded with large amounts of glucose, a pancreas that is overworked, and large amounts of insulin and triglycerides circulating in the bloodstream. Note that excess insulin causes increased production of cholesterol.

Over time, these occasional glucose, triglyceride, and insulin floods can cause a decrease in the sensitivity of the cells' response to insulin, which reduces the cells' ability to take in glucose. Insensitivity to insulin is called insulin resistance, and it is a serious consideration in HIV because we are now seeing it as one of the core components of lipodystrophy and metabolic problems. Some HIV medications can worsen insulin resistance, so we need to be aware of nutritional considerations that can help. Ways to decrease insulin resistance are to exercise, choose more metabolic-friendly HIV medications, and follow a proper diet. For instance, a prominent study from Tufts School of Medicine found that HIV-positive people consuming an overall high-quality diet, rich in fiber and adequate in energy and protein, were less likely to develop fat deposition. This is why it is best to select the

majority of your carbohydrate intake from fiber-rich, slow-releasing carbohydrate sources that do not contain an excessive amount of calories. And these good carbs should be accompanied by good sources of protein and fats.

Combining carbohydrates with protein, fiber, and fat.

Protein, fiber, or fat will slow the absorption into the blood of glucose from carbohydrates, which helps to reduce the rise in blood sugar and insulin spikes. So, mixing carbohydrates with protein, fiber, and good fats is one way to reduce their problematic effect on blood sugar and insulin. Ensure that every meal and snack you consume has a mix of these three macronutrients. But what are the best fats, protein, and high-fiber carbohydrate sources out there?

Fats and oils.

There are a number of different kinds of fats. There is motor oil, there is butter, and there are essential fatty acids. The most important oil to keep a Honda running right is not the kind with essential fatty acids (EFAs), but if you want to help your body stay healthy and your immune system operating at its best, you had better consider getting these EFAs on a daily basis. They are called “essential” because your body cannot manufacture them, and must obtain them from an outside source, like food or supplements. These oils are necessary for every critical function in your metabolism, including building lean body mass and fighting infections.

The main point is that since we need EFAs and other fats for health, we should be getting them in our diets from fresh, high-quality sources. A proper diet reduces the amount of starchy carbohydrates while maintaining a certain amount of healthy fats so that there is a different macronutrient balance than the old high-carbohydrate, high-protein, low-fat diets contained. This means striving to get fatty acids from several sources, the least of which are the saturated fats in butter or animal fat. Understand that saturated fats are not the demons we have been led to believe. When we realize that we evolved getting a certain amount of saturated fat from foods in the wild, it is only logical that they would have a place in a healthy diet. One recent study showed that dietary saturated fat and mono-unsaturated fat were associated with healthy testosterone production in humans, while EFAs had no effect. So it appears that we need a little saturated fat for optimal hormonal health. However, most people get far too much saturated fat, which promotes insulin resistance and metabolic problems, and not enough EFAs, which are needed for healthy cells and immune function. The other important kind of fat that we should consciously include in our daily diet is mono-unsaturated fat, which we get from foods like olive oil. Recent data have shown that mono-unsaturated fats decrease the risk of certain cancers, and have an anti-inflammatory effect. AIDS is an inflammatory disease, so mono-unsaturated fat intake logically has a place of importance in managing AIDS, too.

Fatty acid recommendations.

EFA's include the omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Most people get an imbalance of these two by consuming too small an amount of omega-3 fats, which have anti-inflammatory properties, and relatively too large an amount of omega-6 fats, which tend to promote inflammation when out of balance. To get more omega-3s, eat more fish, including salmon, tuna, sardines, anchovies, mackerel, rainbow trout, and herring. Omega-6s are contained in common vegetable oils, like sunflower, safflower, and corn oils. Try to reduce your intake of these.

Oils and cooking.

Olive oil is one of the best oils to cook with. You can also cook with high-oleic sunflower oil, avocado, canola, macadamia, or any oil that is high in mono-unsaturated fatty acids.

Avoid cooking with oils made from corn and sesame. These oils contain more omega-6 fats, and less mono-unsaturated fats, so they have a higher potential for spoiling and turning to trans-fats, which are bad for the immune system. Try to avoid any intake of these oils when they are not absolutely fresh.

Also, choose oils that are minimally processed. Most of the clear oils in supermarkets are stripped of some of their natural components to make them more suitable for sitting on store shelves for long periods of time without spoiling. Do not use these stripped oils. When you do cook, do not overheat the oil so that it smokes, which causes the formation of carcinogens and destroys the beneficial fatty acids.

Avoid margarine, hydrogenated fats, or processed oils.

Do your best to avoid processed fats or oils, as they have negative effects on cellular health, overall metabolism, and your immune system. Look out for the words hydrogenated and partially-hydrogenated. These kinds of manipulated fats probably do increase the risk of cancer and heart disease. They also weaken healthy cellular immune metabolism, which means that they might increase HIV progression. Lastly, they are also likely to promote high lipid levels and insulin resistance.

Protein, food for the immune system.

Dairy protein fractions, such as caseine (contained in milk curd) and whey, are at the top of the list of proteins that optimally feed lean body mass growth. In dairy products, the amino acid balances, insulin-raising potential, and overall growth factor content add up to one thing: milk proteins were

created to make mammals grow bigger. While there is a lot of hoopla related to which dairy protein fractions are best, there is more misinformation than reality in this area. Those with lactose intolerance should be careful in their selection of milk-based products. Aged cheeses and yogurt may be more tolerable for those who cannot digest lactose.

Egg protein.

Next on the list are egg proteins. The important thing to remember is that whole egg is probably somewhat better than egg white for lean body mass growth and overall health effect, because the yolk is a rich nutrient source, and its protein content complements the protein in the egg white. Together they are a better source of protein.

Meat protein.

While real food like meat often seems to take a back seat to protein powders because of a mindset created by slick advertising, professional athletes know the value of real food related to lean body mass growth. If you do not make real food and meat fundamentals in your diet, you will not grow lean body mass tissue as well. Fish, chicken, turkey, and beef are vitally important foods, not only because of their protein content, but because they contain numerous other nutritional components that are important for a healthy metabolism. The message is: eat real food, then supplement food with protein powder drinks if you need them.

Lean red meat is a superior source for lean body mass growth and blood-building nutrients. These include creatine, carnitine, phenylalanine, conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), and heme- (blood) iron, the most absorbable form of iron. And meat, in general, is less likely to cause allergic reactions than eggs or dairy proteins, like casein and whey. The only caution about red meat is that the high amount of saturated fat most commercial red meat contains could promote metabolic problems. So be moderate about including it in your diet and choose leaner meats if you do.

Important details on meat: cooking kills bacteria in meats. Stewed meat is better for digestion (chicken soup, beef stew). Roasting is okay. Try not to fry or barbecue with charcoal. Charred foods are associated with increased risk of gastrointestinal system cancers. Any cooking of meat or vegetable protein that causes the formation of a hard outer skin renders the protein that becomes the skin to be much less digestible because it cross-links the protein.

Vegetarian diets

It is very difficult to gain lean muscle weight on a vegetarian diet. In fact, it is almost impossible for most people, especially when they are fighting infections that burn lean body mass. While I know a very few HIV-positive people who can do well adhering to a vegetarian regime, I find that the vast majority cannot do it and keep their lean body mass. Additionally, vegetarian diets increase the potential for anemia because of a lack of blood-building components such as highly absorbable heme-iron and vitamin B12.

If you do choose a vegetarian diet, your best protein sources are beans, seeds and nuts. Digestion of nuts and seeds will be improved by soaking them overnight to reduce the enzymes they contain that inhibit digestion of proteins. If you can eat them without digestive problems, many nuts and seeds are ideal foods because they contain protein, healthy fat, and complex carbohydrates in a very good balance for overall health. They also make a great snack between meals. However, the amino acid balances in these proteins do not appear to be optimum for lean body mass growth for humans. Again, vegetarian or vegan diets present a challenge to people with HIV or AIDS who need a full spectrum of amino acids and micronutrients. Unless you are vegetarian for ethical reasons, consider eating eggs and fish.

Caution:

People who are on HIV medications like tenofovir (in Viread, Truvada, Atripla, Complera, and the Quad), which may affect kidney function in some patients, should be careful about increasing their protein intake too high (over 1 gram per pound of body weight per day), as this can increase the potential for kidney problems. Ask your doctor if you are taking kidney burdening medicines, and, if so, only eat a higher protein diet under your doctor's direction. Those who have liver problems need good protein intake for the repair of liver tissue, but should also be careful about higher protein intake, and should also do so only under a doctor's supervision.

Calcium and vitamin D—two important micronutrients

Bone loss has been reported in several HIV studies. It seems to be caused by the effect of the virus on the body. Certain medications like tenofovir (Viread) may make this problem worse. We also seem to have a high incidence of vitamin D deficiency due to potential HIV medication effects or metabolism issues. We know that calcium and vitamin D help to strengthen bone. Many of us chose to take calcium plus vitamin D supplements, but there are also foods that are rich in these nutrients. Calcium-rich foods include milk, cheese, spinach, fortified orange juice (be careful with the sugar, though!), fish, eggs, and beans. Vitamin D-rich foods include milk, most fish, and eggs. However, most of us do not consume the 1000 mg and 2000 IU needed per day for calcium and vitamin D,

respectively, and need to take over-the-counter supplements. One word of caution: do not take your calcium supplements with your HIV medications since they may interfere with their absorption (at least two hours before or after is okay).

Miscellaneous nutrition tips

- If diet, weight loss, and exercise fail to lower your LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, ask your doctor for a prescription for lipid-lowering agents (statins, fibrates, etc.) or to switch your meds to a more lipid-friendly HIV medication combination.
- For your food, shop mostly in the outer part of the grocery store where the fresh produce, meats, and milk products/eggs are. Avoid overly processed canned or packaged foods, except for frozen vegetables. Read the labels and avoid products with many preservatives and additives. Trans-fats and hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup, and high sugar should be on your radar when reading labels.
- Try to eat several smaller balanced (protein + good carbs + good fats) meals or snacks instead of two to three large ones. Smaller meals/snacks are more easily digestible, keep blood sugar and insulin more constant through the day, and keep you from binge eating late at night.
- Eat more almonds, walnuts, pecans and pistachios (good cholesterol-lowering fats). Twice a day, snack on such nuts to get your good fats and fiber. If you wish, mix them with some dried fruit. Research has shown that people who eat nuts tend to have lower LDL cholesterol.
- Avoid junk and fast food. The best way to do this is to have enough food at home and to bring lunch to work. Cook a lot of food on weekends and freeze meals in small containers you can heat up later.
- Do not sabotage yourself by bringing sweets and junk into your home. Watch your cravings at night, when most people find it the most difficult to avoid overdrinking alcohol or eating ice cream, cookies, and comfort foods.
- Eat a large breakfast, a moderate lunch, and a small dinner. Skipping breakfast makes you more prone to overcompensate by eating more calories late in the day. Your body has spent several hours without food and is starved for nutrients in the morning. Do not feed it sugar and white flour products at this important time. Eggs, oatmeal (the type that has no added sugar, and you can add whey protein powder to it!), Greek-style yogurt with nuts and fiber supplements, low-fat cottage cheese with fruit, almond butter on multigrain (high-fiber) bread, and fruit are all good choices for breakfast.
- For lunch have some soup and a glass of water first and wait 10 minutes to trick your body into feeling full faster. Grilled chicken with vegetables, tuna salad over greens and nuts, a Greek

salad with sliced steak, and any Mediterranean food choices are good.

- For dinner, fill yourself with stir-fried (use olive oil!) vegetables and lean meats. Two hours before bed, you can have half an almond butter sandwich or yogurt with fruit. You will not be hungry and desperate with this diet!
- Eat fruits and vegetables of all colors. Each has a different antioxidant profile. The produce section of the market is basically a fresh vitamin department and a medicine chest. Some foods like garlic, onions, and ginger have genuine therapeutic effects. Eating the widest variety of fresh produce on a daily basis assures you of getting all the ingredients that nature provides that can help keep your body strong enough to handle bacteria and viruses so that you stay healthy.
- Avoid sodas, sweet drinks, and fruit juices (fruit sounds healthy, but juice contains too much sugar and no fiber to slow down its absorption into the blood). Consuming sugar daily can affect your metabolism, create insulin resistance, make you fat, and have all kinds of negative health consequences. The suggested pecking order of carbohydrate food sources that support your health without increasing insulin resistance follows. Best are vegetables in their many forms. Next are beans and peas. These deliver more calories than vegetables, but the carbohydrates release much more slowly than grains. Next are whole grains, which are calorie-dense but contain carbohydrates that, in general, release somewhat slowly. At the bottom, and the most likely to promote body fat problems, are carbohydrates from milled grains, like wheat and corn. Whole grains are marginally better than processed grains, but when they are milled into flour the difference is not that great. The very worst carbohydrate sources are sweets, like candies, which can deliver as many as 2,000 calories per pound. Try to eat from the first group of slow-release carbohydrate sources most of the time, and if you are relatively healthy, you can have small amounts of milled wheat products or sweets once in awhile.
- Drink lots of water. Six to eight glasses a day is a good goal. If you get thirsty, you are already dehydrated!
- Eat a high-protein, complex carbohydrate-rich meal after workouts. Examples: chicken salad with nuts, cottage cheese or yogurt and nuts/fruit, celery sticks and hummus (chickpea butter), etc.
Manage your intake of caffeine (it reduces appetite but can increase anxiety). Do not have any caffeine after 4 p.m., since it can impair your sleep.
- Minimize hidden sugars like high fructose corn syrup. Read the labels of food you buy. Diet sodas tend to make your brain crave sweets in general, so they are not good substitutes for sugary drinks. Water, water, water!
- If you do not consume at least 20 grams of fiber a day, add to your intake supplements like

Citruccell or Benefiber, purchased in any grocery store. Fiber improves insulin sensitivity, makes you feel full longer, keeps your gut healthy (friendly gut bacteria that produce vitamins love fiber), keeps you regular and reduces diarrhea, and can lower the chances of getting colon cancer.

- Eating healthy is eating smart, and it does not mean that you should starve yourself. Hopefully, this information has shed some light on healthy food sources and how they can affect health and the body. Now that we are living longer, food choices can determine how well we do as we age with HIV. So, take charge of your health and take care of your body. It is the only one you have.