

## **Let the words TIME TO ACT remind you of the things that lead to poor nutritional health.**

### **Too Many Poor Eating Habits**

Nutrient deficiencies can be caused by eating too little, eating the same foods daily, or not eating fruit, vegetables, and milk products daily. Drinking alcoholic beverages daily can depress the immune system.

### **Increased Nutrient Needs**

People with HIV have increased nutrient needs. Knowing what your nutrient needs are makes it easier for you to meet them and stay healthy.

### **Medications**

Most people with HIV take daily medications. Nutritional health can change the way we respond to drugs. Drug side effects such as appetite changes, nausea, vomiting, taste changes, diarrhea, constipation, and anemia (loss of red blood cells) also affect nutritional status. Vitamins and minerals can act like drugs when taken in large amounts. A doctor, and a RD or DTR can help you deal with medication side effects.

### **Economic Difficulty**

Having a yearly income of less than \$8,000 may not allow you to buy the foods you need to stay healthy.

### **Too Little Social Contact**

Some depressed adults limit social contact. Depression affects appetite, digestion, weight and energy level. It affects thinking and sleep patterns too. Increasing social contact helps increase appetite, and well-being.

### **Occasionally Needs Assistance In Self Care**

People with HIV may find it hard to shop for food or prepare the food they have. Some people find it difficult to eat. A case manager and a RD or DTR may be able to help you get home health care services.

### **Any Medical Condition or Opportunistic Infection**

Medical conditions or opportunistic infections that cause you to change the way you eat, or decrease the amount of food you eat, can put your nutritional health at risk. Some people with HIV have a hard time remembering if they have eaten. Memory loss or confusion also makes it hard to remember what was eaten.

### **Can't Keep Usual Weight**

Weight gain or loss, or loss of muscle mass is a symptom that should not be overlooked. Being overweight, underweight, or below your usual body weight increases your chance of getting sick. Seek medical care from a doctor and nutritional services from a RD or DTR for any unexplained or unwanted weight gain or loss.

### **Tooth or Mouth Problems**

Some people with HIV have dental problems or conditions that make it hard for them to eat. Mouth sores, gum conditions, thrush, missing, loose or rotten teeth may make it hard to eat enough nutrients. A dentist and a RD or DTR can help you to increase your nutrient intake.

It's easier to maintain optimal nutritional health when you know what your needs are. A RD or DTR can assess your nutrition needs and get you started on the road to good nutritional health.

# Nutritional Risk Checklist

Good nutrition can help you in many ways. Please read on to learn how important your nutritional health is and to see if it is **TIME TO ACT** on your own behalf.

The benefits of good nutrition include:

- ❶ Avoiding vitamin and mineral deficiency or excess
- ❷ Improving the body's ability to fight off infections
- ❸ Improving the response to drug therapies
- ❹ Avoiding unnecessary immune system depletion
- ❺ Maintaining or restoring body weight
- ❻ Increasing the quality of life

Read the questions below to measure your nutritional health. Each group of questions shows a different level of risk. Place a mark in the column for each yes answer that applies to you.

- Group 1:
- I eat many of my meals alone.
  - My food intake is less or more than usual.
  - I take two or more different medications a day.
  - I have food allergies or there are foods that I avoid eating.
  - I am on a special diet.

- Group 2:
- Sometimes I am not able to afford the food I need.
  - I eat less than a total of 5 fruits or vegetables every day.
  - I do not know what my calorie and protein needs are.
  - I have lost or gained weight in the last six months, without trying to.
  - Sometimes I am not able to shop for food, cook or feed myself.
  - I take dietary supplements or receive treatments that are not prescribed by my doctor.

- Group 3:
- I eat less than three meals a day.
  - It is hard for me to eat because of tooth or mouth problems.
  - I smoke cigarettes or use recreational substances (drugs) not prescribed by my doctor.
  - I often experience nausea, vomiting, taste alterations or diarrhea.
  - I usually drink more than two alcoholic (beer, liquor, wine) beverages a day.
  - I do not eat protein (eggs, dairy products, poultry, meat, dried beans) at each meal.

Total Yes  
Answers:

Total your score by adding the yes answers. Is it **TIME TO ACT**? More yes answers show increased nutritional risk. More than two yes answers in group two or three may mean an increased risk of nutrition-related conditions.

See a Registered Dietitian (RD) or Dietetic Technician, Registered (DTR) to get a baseline nutrition assessment. If you learn what your nutritional needs are now you will be more able to meet them. See a doctor and a RD or DTR if you answered yes to **5 or more** questions. Turn the page to learn more about nutritional health. Write down your weight and height then give this form to your health care provider. Ask them to give you a copy.

Date:

Weight:

Height:

