Tips to Tame Your Tummy

Being HIV positive can cause stomach problems like diarrhea, constipation, nausea, vomiting, gas/bloating and loss of appetite. The good news is, dietary treatment and medications are available to help soothe your stomach.

What causes an upset stomach?

Stomach problems can be caused by many things such as medications (HIV meds, antibiotics, antifungals), parasitic or bacterial infections, lactose intolerance (inability to digest dairy products), food allergies, nutritional supplements (Ensure, Boost), and emotional issues like stress or depression.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is defined as having several watery, loose, or abnormal stools for several days in a row. Cramps, bloating, and nausea often accompany diarrhea.

Chronic diarrhea is common in HIV infection. Luckily, over the counter and prescription medications are available to alleviate diarrhea and dietary modifications can help.

Avoid the Rough Stuff:

- Overly spicy or sweet food
- Oily, high fat, or fried foods
- Raw fruits & vegetables
- Caffeine
- High fiber and whole grains

Dairy products contain lactose which can cause diarrhea in lactose sensitive people. If you suspect you are lactose sensitive, we suggest eliminating dairy products for two weeks. If you see an improvement we recommend choosing lactose free dairy products or taking a lactaid pill before eating dairy in the future.

Include the Boring Stuff:

- Well cooked skinless, soft fruits & vegetables
- Oatmeal or cream of wheat
- White pasta, crackers, or rice
- Boiled eggs
- Skinless poultry
- Watered down juices
- Lactaid milk products
- Clear soups and broths
- Potassium rich foods

Please note: If you are experiencing diarrhea, make sure you see your doctor to rule out any parasitic or bacterial infection. These are not treated with over the counter anti-diarrhea medications.

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea and vomiting can decrease your dietary intake and the absorption of much needed nutrients. All HIV medications can increase nausea. Most nausea related to new medications subsides within the first few weeks. There are over the counter and prescription medications to treat these problems, but the dietary recommendations below can also help:

- Ginger ale, ginger tea, or chopped ginger root
- Peppermint or chamomile tea
- High fiber foods
- Saltine crackers
- Eating small, frequent meals
- Avoiding spicy, greasy, or strong smelling foods
- Eating sitting up, avoiding lying down right after eating
- Engaging in meditation & breathing techniques

Eating for Energy

The chilly winter weather can be an energy drain on everyone. Now that its spring, make sure you’re eating right so your energy can be at its highest! Here are five simple tips on how to fight fatigue with diet.

Eat Breakfast

It will ensure that you are starting off with enough fuel in your gas tank to carry you through the day!

Eat Frequently

Eating small, frequent meals and snacks will keep your blood sugar stable, and energy levels up. It will also help you avoid overeating at meal times, which can cause extreme lethargy!

Go for whole grains

Refined grains are converted to sugar very quickly after they’re eaten. This results in a quick energy burst, followed by a crash. Instead, choose whole grains, which take longer to digest because of their high fiber content and provide a lasting source of energy. Plus, they’re higher in vitamins and minerals!

Mind your vitamins and minerals

You need to eat a certain amount of foods from each food group (fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy and grains) everyday to make sure you are getting the essential vitamins and minerals your body needs to function at its best. Some especially important nutrients for keeping your energy up are iron, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, and folate. These can be found in meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, leafy green vegetables, beans, and fortified grains and cereals.

Stay hydrated

Even mild dehydration can cause fatigue by reducing blood flow to the organs and slowing the absorption and transport of nutrients. Try to drink at least 8 cups per day!

Spice of the Quarter:

Cardamom

Cardamom is an herb that is part of the ginger family, and has been used for centuries as both a flavoring agent as well as a cure for many common ailments. It can be found in pods, or already ground, and has a very strong, slightly sweet, slightly spicy taste—so a little goes a long way!

Traditionally, cardamom has been used to treat oral infections, throat pain, lung congestion, and inflammation around the eyes. It has also been shown to be an effective treatment against digestive disorders. Specifically, cardamom works on the smooth muscles in the digestive tract, relieving both cramping and gas. It also helps stimulate the release of gastric acid, aiding in digestion and improving appetite, as well as reducing nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Cardamom is a key ingredient in many curry and masala spice blends. Ground cardamom pods can also be used to flavor rice, bean, lentil or meat dishes, and even coffee, tea and baked goods. A simple way to enjoy the benefits of cardamom is to mix a few pinches into a cup of plain yogurt or warm milk, or add it to your favorite spice blend!

Cardamom Spice Rub

This spice rub is great on chicken, meat, fish, or tofu. Just rub it lightly with olive oil, and sprinkle some of the rub on both sides. Using your fingers, gently rub it into whatever you’re cooking. Then grill or bake as you usually would!

Ingredients:

3 Tbsp ground cardamom
3 Tbsp ground ginger
2 Tbsp ground turmeric
2 Tbsp ground coriander
1 Tbsp ground allspice
1 tsp ground black pepper
1 tsp ground cayenne
1 tsp ground cloves

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients in a small bowl.
2. Store in an airtight container for up to two months.

Sources:

Tropical Chicken

**Ingredients:**
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 cup mango, cubed
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp. lime juice
- 2 (15 oz.) cans black beans

**Instructions:**
1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees
2. Place chicken in ungreased baking pan and bake for 40 minutes
3. Mix all other ingredients and spoon over the chicken
4. Cook for 30 more minutes
5. Remove from the oven and enjoy!

Serves 4

Fruit of the Quarter: Mango

Mangos are a sweet, tropical fruit that taste like a mix between pineapples and peaches. They contain over 20 vitamins and minerals, including vitamin A, which is important in vision, bone health, and in fighting infections, and vitamin C which is needed for keeping the immune system functioning at its best. Mangos are also high in potassium, which keeps nerves and muscles working properly, and are a great source of fiber—a medium sized mango can provide up to 40% of the daily requirement!

Mangos can also be a great comfort food for your stomach! They contain enzymes that break down protein and aid in digestion, and are said to reduce stomach acid and relieve nausea and constipation.

Mangos are easiest to find in the spring, when they are in season. Other times of the year they can be found jarred as chutneys or salsas, which taste great on top of grilled chicken or fish. This spring, try making fresh mango smoothies, or mix diced mangos with onions, cilantro, jalapeño peppers, and lime juice for an easy, healthy salsa. Pureed mangos can also be frozen to make a healthy and refreshing dessert! Peeled and crushed mango also tastes great when added to green tea (hot or iced), or a pitcher of water for some added, natural flavor.

When choosing a mango, don’t go by its color, since perfectly ripe mangos can be green, yellow, red or orange. Instead, look for one that is slightly soft and has a fruity smell. Unripe mangos can be left to ripen at room temperature, then can be kept in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. They can be sliced easily by removing both ends, cutting off the peel from top to bottom, and then cutting slices lengthwise along the pit. Enjoy them all spring in tons of different ways!

**Sources:**
- http://www.freshmangos.com/wdb/cgi-bin/wdb.cgi/a1net/recipes/more/391

(Tame Your Tummy, from page 1)

- Consuming simple plain foods like bananas, canned fruits, fruit ices, rice, toast, farina noodles, boiled chicken, baked fish, boiled eggs & soup

Gas and Constipation

Gas is made in the stomach as food is digested. It is a normal part of life, but many things can affect how much gas we produce. HIV medications increase gas production, but stress, hormone changes, and even minor food intolerances increase gassiness. Eating certain foods like beans, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, milk products, soy products, and eggs can stimulate gas production.

Constipation means that you haven’t had a bowel movement in 3 days. Certain medications like methadone and those used for pain, heart burn and depression can cause constipation. Inadequate fluid intake, lack of exercise, and stress can also lead to constipation.

Treatments to avoid gas and constipation include over the counter and prescription medications. For gas, dietary treatments like eating and drinking in a stress free environment, eating slowly and chewing foods thoroughly can decrease symptoms. Also, avoid smoking, chewing gum, drinking carbonated beverages and using straws in order to limit swallowing excess air.

A diet high in insoluble fiber can help prevent and manage constipation. Foods with insoluble fiber include: nuts and seeds, raw fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, low fat popcorn, brown rice wheat germ, bran cereals, and whole grain breads. Also drink plenty of fluids and include regular physical activity.

Loss of Appetite

Loss of appetite can be caused by HIV medications, the virus itself, emotional issues (stress, anxiety and depression) and other illnesses. In severe cases, extreme weight loss and wasting can result. See your registered dietitian at GMHC for diet tricks to help maximize food intake. Appetite stimulants can also be prescribed to increase appetite and your doctor will determine if they are right for you.

If any signs and symptoms become severe or chronic seek the attention of your medical provider.

**Sources:**