

# GMHC'S Nutrition & Wellness Program

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## THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

### WHAT IS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM?

The immune system is a group of organs and cells that defend the body against infection, disease and foreign substances. It keeps you healthy and strong.

### NUTRITION & THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

Because HIV attacks the immune system you want to make sure you keep it as strong as possible. You can do that by eating a healthy diet!

Food provides you with many of the nutrients you need to maintain a healthy body. A healthy balance of all nutrients helps support the immune system.

### CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates supply the immune system with energy so that it can work better and fight disease.

#### **Increase whole grain complex carbohydrates, such as:**

- Whole-wheat bread
- Brown rice
- Whole-wheat pasta
- Grains like whole-wheat couscous, quinoa, barley
- Cereals like oatmeal, shredded wheat, bran cereals

#### **Limit simple sugars, such as:**

- White and brown sugar, honey
- Candy
- Malta
- Soda

#### **Limit processed carbs, such as:**

- White bread products
- Cakes, cookies, pies

### PROTEINS

Proteins make enzymes, which help the immune cells kill germs, viruses and bacteria. They also help maintain your muscle mass.

#### **Choose lean meats**

- White meat turkey
- Lean pork (ham)
- White meat chicken
- Lean red meats
- Fish

#### **Choose plant proteins**

- Nuts and beans
- Peanut butter
- Tofu and other soy products

#### **Limit high fat meats**

- Take the skin off chicken
- Trim the fat off steak and pork
- Limit bacon, sausage, salami and ground beef

## **FATS**

Fats are necessary for the body and immune system to work properly. They serve as fuel for the immune cells.

### **Choose Omega-3 fats, such as:**

- Cold water fish like, salmon, mackerel, herring, halibut, albacore tuna, anchovies, trout and sardines
- Flaxseeds oil, canola oil (cold pressed oils are best)
- Walnuts, flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, soybeans and tofu

### **Limit Saturated Fats:**

- Choose lean sources of saturated fat such as chicken (without skin), low-fat dairy, lean cuts of beef and pork
- Avoid coconut oil, palm oil and hydrogenated vegetable oils (Crisco).

## **OTHER NUTRIENTS THAT ENHANCE THE IMMUNE SYSTEM**

Phytochemicals, vitamins and minerals are substances found in plant foods that help to boost the immune system.

### **Add color to your plate**

- Increase your fruit and vegetable intake to 3 – 5 per day
- Choose dark green vegetables, such as spinach, kale, collards and mustard greens.
- Choose cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cabbage and Brussels sprouts
- Go for vibrant reds, yellow and oranges by choosing foods like red and yellow peppers, oranges, watermelons, oranges and squash

### **Add spice to your food**

- Use onions, leeks, shallots and garlic
- Use herbs such as oregano, basil, thyme, rosemary and dill to add flavor and nutrients to your food.

