

Press Release



For immediate release

21 November 2011

A Healthy Diet Plays a Vital Role in the Lives of People Living with HIV

The British Dietetic Association (BDA) is fully supporting World AIDS Day (01 December 2011), by highlighting the vital importance of good nutrition for those living with HIV and AIDS. The BDA also has a specialist group working in this field called Dietitians in HIV and AIDS (DHIVA).

People living with HIV are living longer and healthier lives thanks to antiretroviral therapy which suppresses the virus. A balanced diet is important to maintain all aspects of good health including a strong immune system. Together, antiretrovirals and good nutrition are partners in helping people to feel better and manage their disease.

People living with HIV are more likely to develop high cholesterol, diabetes and osteoporosis, partly as a side effect of some of the antiretroviral medicines. As well as playing a role in helping the immune system function better, good nutrition can keep the gut healthy to enhance absorption of nutrients and drugs, and it can also help treat and prevent high cholesterol and body fat changes. Together, a balanced diet, activity and exercise can help maintain an ideal weight and reduce the risk for developing diseases such as diabetes and osteoporosis. Research has shown that regular assessment and advice from a dietitian prevents development of HIV-related high cholesterol.

Dietitians in HIV/AIDS (DHIVA), a group of the British Dietetic Association, provide medical nutrition therapy and specialist individually-tailored advice to help support people living with HIV to eat well and be healthy.

Registered Dietitian and Chair of the BDA group DHIVA, Alastair Duncan, said:

“Nutritional interventions for those living with HIV are so important to help maintain a strong and healthy body. I would strongly urge anyone who has been diagnosed with HIV to ask their treating doctor or nurse to refer them to a specialist Dietitian or to the excellent charity ‘The Food Chain’ if you live in London.”

The Food Chain is the only specialist charity in the UK that focuses on using nutrition to support people living with HIV, and their dependents. A range of practical services are available to support people who struggle to access appropriate nutrition.

Services are delivered across London by over 900 volunteers and include providing tailored meals, groceries and cookery and nutrition classes.

ENDS

**For more information / interview requests, please contact the BDA Press Office on
0870 850 2517**

Notes to the Editor:

- Visit the BDA website at www.bda.uk.com or www.foodchain.org.uk or www.dhiva.org.uk
- The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with over 6,000 members.
- Registered dietitians are the only qualified health professionals that assess, diagnose and treat diet and nutrition problems at an individual and wider public health level. Uniquely, dietitians use the most up to date public health and scientific research on food, health and disease, which they translate into practical guidance to enable people to make appropriate lifestyle and food choices.
- Dietitians are the only nutrition professionals to be statutorily regulated, and governed by an ethical code, to ensure that they always work to the highest standard. Dietitians work in the NHS, private practice, industry, education, research, sport, media, public relations, publishing, Non Government Organisations and government. Their advice influences food and health policy across the spectrum from government, local communities and individuals.
- World AIDS Day is a worldwide event held on December 1st each year – for more information see www.worldaidsday.org
- Red ribbons are worn on World AIDS day to raise awareness about HIV issues
- There are estimated to be around 95,000 people living with HIV in the UK, over one-quarter of whom do not yet know they are positive
- In the UK thanks to antiretrovirals, good health care and good nutrition, the number of HIV-related deaths over the last 10 years has declined, and HIV positive people are living longer.

- By 2015 it is estimated that in the UK 100,000 people will be living with HIV, half of whom will be over 50 years old.
- Rather than preconceived ideas about wasting and diarrhoea, people living with HIV are now facing a higher risk of developing diseases associated with ageing and obesity: diabetes, raised cholesterol and heart disease, osteoporosis, dementia and cancer.