

## **Food and Nutrition Services** *Feeding the Body and Nourishing the Spirit*

Food is our common ground and our comfort, a necessity we all need to live and to thrive. It sustains our bodies, our minds and our souls. Sharing food is a universal experience, a communal action uniting us regardless of gender, race or religion.

At Dr. Peter Centre West End, nutrition is an essential component of care. A good diet is one of the simplest means of helping people live with HIV/AIDS and may even help delay the progression of the deadly virus. By bolstering the immune system and boosting energy levels, balanced nutrition helps the body fight back against the ravages of the disease. By maintaining body weight, a good diet can support drug treatments and prevent malnutrition.

Despite dulled appetites and difficulties in eating, nutrient-dense food is essential for people living with HIV/AIDS. Our clients need more protein to rebuild muscle tissue, more energy-rich foods for weight gain, immune system-boosting vitamins and minerals, and water to combat dehydration. They require considerable food to fight the illness and to make up for weight loss.

“The Centre has helped me with sustenance; it helped me with counselling, and a little bit with advocacy. My life is better because I’m eating better. I’m able to get two solid meals a day, and if I miss dinner I can miss dinner because I’ve already had two good meals.”  
- David, participant since 1998

### **The Heart of Dr. Peter Centre West End**

Many participants in the Day Health Program are poor and do not have permanent or stable home environments. They have no regular access to food or cooking facilities, and no cooking skills. The meals they receive at the Centre are necessary for their survival.

Our Café is a dynamic place that serves two hot, wholesome meals plus an afternoon snack to our participants five days per week from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. There is also an ongoing supply of hot beverages. The program ensures participants have the caloric intake they need to gain weight and stay healthy.

### **Much Depends on Dinner**

Eating can be a tremendous chore for many of our participants.

“Eating isn’t a joyful activity, it’s not social – it’s just something they have to do,” says Ellie Schmidt, our Nutritional Services Coordinator. “They have very solitary lives, often with lots of acquaintances but not many friends.”

By sitting in the Café and eating meals with other participants and staff, people engage with each other and relationships begin to develop.

“All kinds of magical things happen when people sit at a table together,” Schmidt says. “Eventually food is no longer just a chore. It becomes what we all believe it to be – social bonding, family. Food takes on a different meaning and becomes something nurturing for them.”



### **Nutritious Menu Balances Comfort and Variety**

The Centre's menu is structured to balance dietary needs. For example, on Fridays, the menus are purposely substantial in order to carry participants through the weekend. On Mondays, breakfast includes a protein to help rebuild nutrients and strength. Meals include a daily serving of fresh fruit and vegetables, particularly frozen vegetables that are softer and easier to chew for those participants with poor dental/oral health.

Our clinical dietitian oversees assessment and counselling with participants, offering education and guidance on nutritional status and health. This helps participants make informed decisions that affect their health and well-being.

### **Supporting a Civil Society**

At the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation, we're helping to rebuild lives shattered by HIV/AIDS, addiction, mental illness, poverty and discrimination because of gender and sexual orientation. The innovative, comprehensive model of care at Dr. Peter Centre West End is improving people's health, helping people find strength in the face of an incurable illness, and inspiring health care providers around the world.

The **Food and Nutrition Program** is an essential service at Dr. Peter Centre West End. However, funding from the Provincial Health Services Authority does not cover the cost of food. The global food crisis and fast-rising food costs present additional challenges for us this year. As well, some of our industrial kitchen equipment, purchased when the Dr. Peter Centre opened in 1997 in the Comox Building at St. Paul's Hospital, is no longer in working condition and needs to be replaced. This year, the Foundation must raise more than \$150,000 in ongoing financial support from our caring community of friends to sustain this vital program.

We hope you will share the vision and join the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation in making a tangible and lasting contribution to improve the health and lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

*For more information on supporting the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation and its Food and Nutrition Services, please contact:*

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