

Chapter 8

FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE

PLWHA are immuno-compromised and, therefore, food-borne infections pose an increased risk and must be prevented. The symptoms of such infections include diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, fatigue and abdominal pain. These can be severe and the source of infection can be difficult to identify. It is important to follow good hygiene and food safety recommendations.

8.1 Water and Sanitation:

8.1.1 Environmental Hygiene and Sanitation

Dirty surroundings attract insect vectors such as flies, cockroaches and rodents. All these spread diarrhoeal diseases, which lead to loss of water and nutrients in the body. In addition, indiscriminate disposal of human excreta leads to the spread of diarrhoeal diseases that would lessen absorption of nutrients in the HIV and AIDS patient and worsen his/her condition.

- The general surroundings should be kept clean all the time. All the leftovers and dirt should be safely thrown in the refuse pit.
- Where there are no flush toilets it's advisable to use good well-constructed, clean, ventilated latrines that should also have a cover or lid for the hole. For flush toilets, ensure that these are regularly cleaned and disinfected if possible.
- Hand washing facilities should be provided within the latrine with soap and a towel, wherever possible.

8.1.2 Clean and Safe Water:

- Water for human consumption should be obtained from a protected source. This could be either from a borehole or a protected well, where piped water is not available. Where boreholes or protected wells are not available, water drawn from rivers or streams should be treated.

8.1.3 Storage of Kitchen Utensils:

- Kitchen utensils should not be stored on the ground where they can be contaminated with disease causing organisms. Instead they should be placed on a raised platform, where there is sunlight and enough air circulation.

8.2 Food Handling:

Food handling is important to avoid contamination of food. Some recommendations for safe food handling are given below:

- Hands should be washed with soap or ashes after using the toilet, before preparing and eating food.
- Nails should always be kept short and clean.
- All food preparation surfaces and utensils should be kept clean at all times.
- All raw animal products should be cooked until well done.
- Foods should never be thawed and then re-frozen. Meat should be packed into daily portions before freezing and thawed at refrigerator temperature and not at room temperature.
- Where there is no refrigerator, meat should be dried and stored in a cool place until ready for use.
- Wooden boards should not be used for cutting animal products. Plastic boards are better, and cutting boards and knives should be washed thoroughly with soap before using them for other foods.
- Fruits and vegetables should be washed thoroughly in clean water from safe sources.
- PLWHA should always drink boiled or treated water.

- Feeding bottles should not be used to feed babies, instead clean cups and spoons should be used.
- Personal hygiene should always be observed when breastfeeding.

Proper storage of food is important to prevent spoilage and loss of nutrients. Households are advised to:

- Ensure that environmental conditions like temperature, humidity and ventilation are well controlled in order to retain quality of stored food;
- non perishable foods, such as dry beans, dry kapenta and dry vegetables that do not require refrigeration, should be stored properly;

8.3 Food Storage:

- storage areas should be dry, cool and properly ventilated. Wall vents are important in circulation of air. Circulation of air around bags and cartons of food aids the removal of moisture, reduces temperature and eliminates odours;
- food should be stored using the FIFO (first in – first out) and FEFO (first expiry-first out) method. This means that new supplies should be placed at the back to ensure use of oldest or nearly expiring stock first;
- expiry dates should be checked before consuming. Once a tin has been opened, the food should be removed from the original tins and be kept in a clean and non-metallic storage container;
- food from dented or bulging containers / tins should not be consumed; and

- fresh and frozen foods should be refrigerated immediately, and kept at low temperatures until they are used. For safe storage of frozen foods, the following are essential: Fruits and vegetables should be checked regularly for ripeness and decaying pieces removed to prevent further spoilage.
- Foods that absorb odours, such as eggs, butter and milk, should be stored away from those that give off odours, like fish, onions and leeks.
- Cooked food should be stored above raw meat in the refrigerator to ensure that foods are protected from raw meat drippings.
- Cleanliness is vital to food safety. Refrigerators should be cleaned thoroughly and regularly.
- Left over foods should be kept in covered containers in the refrigerator and used as soon as possible within two days. Where there is no refrigerator, leftovers should be used the same day after thorough heating at high temperature.
- Do not store food for long periods in the refrigerator

8.4 Control of Infectious Diseases:

8.4.1 Control of Malaria:

Malaria parasites attack red blood cells in the body that transport nutrients to different parts of the body. They reduce the number of red cells, which lead to anaemia and worsen the immune system of the HIV and AIDS patient. Malaria, especially during pregnancy, increases the risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In order to control malaria, ensure that:

- all breeding places for mosquitoes are found and destroyed;
- grass around the homes is cut and kept short;
- use of insecticide treated mosquito nets is encouraged; and quick treatment for any fever/malaria is promoted.
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8.4.2 Prevention of Worm Infestation:

- Animals should be kept away from food or water sources as they may contaminate it.
- Periodic de-worming of PLWHA, especially for pregnant and lactating women, and young children, is recommended to prevent anaemia.
- Foods should be well cooked.
- Shoes should be worn, especially when visiting latrines.

8.4.3 Control of Other Vectors

The control of vectors in the provision of holistic care and support to PLWHA is very important. The most common vectors are:

- **Flies** - These sit on unprotected food, feed on it and leave their excreta on it . They carry germs on their bodies and legs, thus contaminating food, which may cause diarrhoeal diseases.

- **Cockroaches** – These also feed on food that is not covered, mostly during the night. They can also contaminate food with harmful organisms.
- **Rats** – These may discharge germs and they can also contaminate the places they visit. Most of these vectors live in filthy places, garbage dumps, excrement, decomposed matter, sewers and drainage pipes. To ensure good health, it is important to get rid these vectors in the home:
- Garbage should be properly thrown in a pit far away from the home. It should not be thrown near food preparation areas or sources of water.
- Where possible, homes should be fumigated to control the vectors.

Chapter 9

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY AND HIV/AIDS

Food security refers to all people at all times having social, physical and economic access to safe nutritious and adequate food. HIV/AIDS affects families by reducing their ability to obtain food through its impact on productive labour, income and food stores. Most often individuals may cut back food intake by reducing portion size or skipping meals, divert any earnings and savings to meet healthcare and funeral costs. This leads to poverty, increased vulnerability to risky behaviour such as sex for food and money, child labour, crime and drug abuse.

HIV/AIDS affects all three components of food security: availability, accessibility and utilization. PLWHA may be unable to follow the nutrition recommendations that are provided due to their inability to access the food required.

PLWHA and families affected by HIV should, therefore, be supported in order for them to provide adequate nutrition care. Support can be provided in the following ways:

1. Assisting communities and those offering support to identify the extent of vulnerability in households in order to provide targeted support. The main objective should be to ensure that support given provides long-term solutions to the affected households, such as diversified means of acquiring food or money through small-scale enterprise developments, coupled with improved access to financing schemes for the rural and urban settings.
2. Assisting vulnerable PLWHA households with alternative labour saving technologies such as safe and efficient cooking facilities, efficient and hygienic food preservation and utilization methods, conservation or organic farming, lighter working tools, like ploughs, axes and hoes, less or minimal tillage.
3. Linking vulnerable PLWHA with marketing agents to assist with selling of their produce in order to obtain cash for buying foods they do not produce.

4. Equipping vulnerable PLWHA who are directly dependant on agriculture for livelihood with food production inputs, including indigenous seeds and credit facilities. More village support systems with labour for land clearing, ploughing, weeding, and harvesting and storage.
5. Providing, where necessary, food packs to PLWHA, child-headed households and home-based care programmes, depending on the degree of severity. The provision of vitamin and mineral supplements to PLWHA may also be necessary with advice from health workers. However, this should be complemented with long-term solutions.
6. In line with the above, service providers and extension workers should work with affected households to plan for those periods of “hunger seasons” when supplies of some foods are low or non-existent.
7. Service providers and extension workers should work with communities to investigate all options for obtaining a variety of foods and to promote food habits that improve the intake of roots, local vegetables and fruits, nuts, insects and oil seeds. These provide nutrients, but have not been recognized as important to the diet.
8. Service providers and extension workers should promote the inclusion of nutrition for PLWHA in community based food and nutrition projects such as gardens and rearing poultry and small livestock.