

# Nutritional supplements keep dying HIV patients alive

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Scientists say nutritional supplements can play a key role in combating the deadly disease.

HIV deaths are declining on the African continent but the incurable disease still claim the lives of far too many.

Better access to medicine has greatly increased HIV-patients' chance of survival but only if they can begin the treatment in time; and time is important when you living on a continent where malnourishment is a common sight.

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) progresses more aggressively in malnourished patients and even with antiretroviral therapy (ARV) up to 25 per cent of HIV-patients die in the first months.

Scientists from University of Copenhagen and Jimma University in Ethiopia have recently demonstrated how nutritional supplements could be a tool to reduce that high death rate.

## **Regained strength improves life**

Treating patients daily with 200 grams of vitamin and protein-infused peanut butter simultaneously with the ARV therapy proved to greatly improve patients' condition, said Dr. Mette Frahm Olsen, [in a press release from University of Copenhagen](#) [4].

"Patients gained three time as much weight compared to those in ARV therapy who didn't receive supplements," she said.

Surprisingly, the patients weren't only gaining fat -- one third of the weight gain was an increase in muscle mass.

"This improved their ability to maintain their work and everyday activities," said Olsen, who co-authored the study that has just been published in the scientific journal BMJ.

## **Proteins boosted immune system**

The supplements also seemed to benefit the patient's immune systems.

"Cells suppressed by HIV recovered faster in patients who received protein in their supplements," said Olsen.

The importance of nutrition is often overlooked in HIV treatments today, she said. "But the new findings demonstrate how relevant nutritional supplements can be for HIV patients in countries with widespread malnourishment."

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 [Scientists from University of Copenhagen and Jimma University in Ethiopia have recently demonstrated how nutritional supplements can help keep African HIV patients alive.](#)(Photo: [spirit of america](http://www.shutterstock.com/gallery-978674p1.html?cr=00&pl=edit-00)</a><a href="http://www.shutterstock.com/?cr=00&pl=edit-00" target="\_blank">Shutterstock.com</a>) [6]  
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