

How would you rate your quality of life?

Individuals with HIV/AIDS may have a difficult time reaching a high rating. At the Southwest Center for HIV/AIDS, the Kirk D. Baxter Wellness Center helps enhance the quality of life for nearly 2,000 men and women in Arizona who are impacted by the disease. The Wellness Center provides complementary alternative medicine (CAM), behavioral health, nutritional counseling and products from the vitamin and herb shop. Clients who utilize these services experience profound, positive changes in their lives.

We offer services which complement primary care in order to broaden the scope of care for each client. Naturopathic physicians provide acupuncture, vitamin and nutrient therapy, registered dietitians provide nutrition and dietary advice, and licensed behavioral health counselors provide emotional support through a variety of programs, including individual sessions and support groups.

Child watch is available on site for all clients utilizing services at the agency.

NATUROPATHIC AND DIETARY CARE

Naturopathic medicine focuses on the whole person and is tailored toward individual health and the unique care of each person. Care emphasizes prevention and caring for one's self and goes beyond symptoms to treat the underlying cause of a person's condition. The benefit of such complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and treatments – acupuncture, hydrotherapy, botanical medicine and intravenous nutrient therapy – is that therapies minimize side effects of the virus and toxicity from HIV medications. Additionally, vitamins and herbs prescribed by naturopathic physicians boost an individual's immune system and assist in the absorption of nutrients. Naturopathic physicians work in conjunction with medical physicians who refer clients to the Wellness Center.

Registered dietitians play an integral role in the lives of those infected with HIV/AIDS. They work closely with clients to devise a customized nutritional plan that minimizes side effects of HIV/AIDS medications – all with enjoyable foods.

Naturopathic physicians and registered dietitians provide individualistic care for clients who are referred to the Wellness Center by medical physicians. *Providers employ the following techniques for all clients:*

- Nutritional counseling
- Acupuncture
- Physical manipulation
- Homeopathy
- Vitamin supplementation and botanical medicine
- Pharmacy adherence
- Intravenous nutrient therapy
- Friends & Family vitamin program

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Licensed behavioral health professionals offer counseling to HIV-positive individuals from the newly diagnosed to the long-term survivor. Counselors at the agency assist clients in managing the multitude of emotions and challenges they may encounter when diagnosed as HIV-positive. Families, partners and caregivers sometimes participate in an infected person's sessions; therefore, support services are available in several formats including individual, couple and group settings. *Services for all include:*

- Behavioral health counseling – individual, couple and family
- Psychological testing
- Pet support program – the Agnes Fund helps support the pets of individuals impacted by HIV/AIDS.
- Positive Pals – a program that decreases isolation of some HIV-positive individuals and increases quality of mental health.
- Various support groups for those impacted by HIV

As mentioned, services for men and women include various support groups designed to meet the diverse needs of HIV-positive individuals. Some support groups are gender-specific, and there are sub groups under each category that address the needs of that particular group. Because so many different issues arise for those who are HIV-positive, the distinction of individual sub groups becomes more and more important.

Coping skills, facing life's challenges and developing support systems are just a few of the benefits HIV-positive individuals gain from attending regularly scheduled meetings. New groups form when the need arises and all groups are listed at www.swhiv.org, where a calendar of meeting times is also available.

In addition to providing services to a wide spectrum of clients, wellness programs will contribute to worldwide research through studies partnered with research institutions. For more information about health and wellness services at the Southwest Center for HIV/AIDS, contact us at 602-307-5330 or www.swhiv.org.