With a Trace

A mineral may supplement CD4s—but dose it right.

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Selenium rocks. The trace mineral, found in soil, provides antioxidants that help repair cell damage and build up the immune system. But people with HIV may not absorb enough of the nutrient from the usual sources (those with plant origins are best, from veggies to grains to nuts).

In January, a study found that selenium supplements seemed to raise CD4 levels in positive folks (an average of 30 CD4s over nine months, vs. 25 cells in the placebo group) and keep viral loads from rising. The trial brand, Nutrition 21's Selenomax, contains 200 micrograms in a form the body absorbs readily. Whatever brand you use, stick close to this recommended amount (and note: micrograms, not milligrams. A microgram is one thousandth of a milligram). The key word is trace—you only need a tiny dose. Too much can be toxic, possibly causing fatigue, nausea and loss of hair, nails or teeth, so aim low.

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