



# Nutrition Advice for Adults During COVID-19

Proper nutrition and hydration are vital. People who eat a well-balanced diet tend to be healthier with stronger immune systems and lower risk of chronic illnesses and infectious diseases. So you should eat a variety of fresh and unprocessed foods every day to get the vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, protein and antioxidants your body needs. Drink enough water. Avoid sugar, fat and salt to significantly lower your risk of overweight, obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and certain types of cancer.

## Eat fresh and unprocessed foods every day

Eat fruits, vegetables, legumes (e.g. lentils, beans), nuts and whole grains (e.g. unprocessed maize, millet, oats, wheat, brown rice or starchy tubers or roots such as potato, yam, taro or cassava), and foods from animal sources (e.g. meat, fish, eggs and milk).

- Daily, eat: 2 cups of fruit (4 servings), 2.5 cups of vegetables (5 servings), 180 g of grains, and 160 g of meat and beans (red meat can be eaten 1–2 times per week, and poultry 2–3 times per week).
- For snacks, choose raw vegetables and fresh fruit rather than foods that are high in sugar, fat or salt.
- Do not overcook vegetables and fruit as this can lead to the loss of important vitamins.
- When using canned or dried vegetables and fruit, choose varieties without added salt or sugar.

## Drink enough water every day

- Water is essential for life. It transports nutrients and compounds in blood, regulates your body temperature, gets rid of waste, and lubricates and cushions joints.
- Drink 8–10 cups of water every day.
- Water is the best choice, but you can also

consume other drinks, fruits and vegetables that contain water, for example lemon juice (diluted in water and unsweetened), tea and coffee. But be careful not to consume too much caffeine, and avoid sweetened fruit juices, syrups, fruit juice concentrates, fizzy and still drinks as they all contain sugar.

## Eat moderate amounts of fat and oil

- Consume unsaturated fats (e.g. found in fish, avocado, nuts, olive oil, soy, canola, sunflower and corn oils) rather than saturated fats (e.g. found in fatty meat, butter, coconut oil, cream, cheese, ghee and lard).
- Choose white meat (e.g. poultry) and fish, which are generally low in fat, rather than red meat.
- Avoid processed meats because they are high in fat and salt.
- Where possible, opt for low-fat or reduced-fat versions of milk and dairy products.
- Avoid industrially produced trans fats. These are often found in processed food, fast food, snack food, fried food, frozen pizza, pies, cookies, margarines and spreads.

## Eat less salt and sugar

- When cooking and preparing food, limit the amount of salt and high-sodium condiments (e.g. soy sauce and fish sauce).
- Limit your daily salt intake to less than 5 g (approximately 1 teaspoon), and use iodized salt.
- Avoid foods (e.g. snacks) that are high in salt and sugar.
- Limit your intake of soft drinks or sodas and other drinks that are high in sugar (e.g. fruit juices, fruit juice concentrates and syrups, flavoured milks and yogurt drinks).
- Choose fresh fruits instead of sweet snacks such as cookies, cakes and chocolate.

## Stock up on nutrition-packed foods that will stay fresh for a week or longer

- Breads – corn tortillas, whole grain English muffins, bagels, breads, wraps, frozen whole wheat waffles
- Grains – instant oatmeal, quick cooking pasta, frozen brown rice, couscous, refrigerated pizza crust
- Fruits – sturdy fresh fruit (apples, citrus), dried, plain frozen, canned in juice or water
- Vegetables – sturdy fresh veggies (celery, broccoli, onions, potatoes), plain frozen, low sodium canned, sun-dried
- Sauces – tomato pasta sauce, salsa
- Soups & Broths – canned, frozen, shelf-stable cartons
- 100% Juice – refrigerated, frozen, canned, boxed
- Milk – fresh, canned, shelf-stable packages
- Eggs – fresh eggs, egg whites in cartons
- Cheese – sliced, cubed, shredded, crumbled, grated hard cheese
- Beans/Legumes – canned beans (black beans, chickpeas), dry beans
- Nuts and seeds – bagged, canned, nut butters
- Chicken – frozen or canned
- Seafood – frozen ready-to-cook fish fillets, frozen shrimp, canned tuna, salmon, and sardines
- Beef – pre-made frozen lean ground patties or meatballs
- Flavorings – add zing with dried herbs & spices, vinegars, mustard, hot/steak sauces, lemon/lime juice, light dressings, honey, Greek yogurt

Go easy on the frozen dinners—most are high in sodium, fat, and calories.

Limit purchases of tempting foods like chips, sodas, cookies, and ice cream. They are high in empty calories and run up your grocery bill.

## Plan, plan, then plan more

Create a shopping list and stick to it. Make a plan for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks -- then build your shopping list accordingly. Inventory items you already have and build your menus using items you already have to reduce food waste.

## Keep costs down – consider low cost alternatives

Instead of buying ready-made hummus, pureed a drained can of chickpeas to make your own. Try a meatless meal, like chili with beans instead of beef. If fresh fruits and veggies are too costly—remember, canned and frozen fruits and vegetables provide the same nutrients as fresh. Best bets are plain frozen veggies and fruits. Go for low sodium canned veggies and fruits canned in juice or water—if these are in short supply, buy regular canned fruits and veggies—drain and rinse before use.

## Maintain normal eating routines

Whether you are working in the office or in a new working environment (home office), maintain your normal eating habits to keep unwanted weight gain at bay. If working from home, you have access to more snacks. Be mindful of reaching for snacks out of boredom. Emotional eating is real! Buy healthy snacks to replace treats that are challenging to avoid. Maintaining your regular routines will help keep eating habits under control. Remember, healthy eating is especially important to keep your immune system working optimally.

## Develop healthy habits now

Use this time to make healthy changes you were not ready to attempt before. Make a list of healthy lifestyle goals and begin with one simple goal. Eat breakfast daily and avoid skipping meals. Find new, healthy recipes, get the family involved, and make one night each week “Try a New Recipe Night.”

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### References:

- 6 Ideas from a Dietitian During COVID-19, Megan Hall, RD, LMNT, LDN, LD, LN, CD, CDN, Amber Pharmacy (**THANK YOU, AMBER PHARMACY!**)
- <http://www.emro.who.int/nutrition/nutrition-infocus/nutrition-advice-for-adults-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html>
- <https://nutrition.org/making-health-and-nutrition-a-priority-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/>