

NUTRITION ADVICE DURING COVID-19 INFECTION & RECOVERY

Nutrition plays an important role both during and after COVID-19 infection. Right now, your body needs high energy and high protein foods to help maintain your weight and muscle mass. In addition, vitamins and minerals are essential for your recovery. This advice sheet is designed to maximise your nutritional intake during Covid-19 infection and recovery.

If you have lost weight unintentionally or have a reduced appetite/are feeling full quickly:

- Aim for 3 small meals per day, with snacks in between. See suggested meals/snacks list overleaf.
- Try eating little amounts of food often, throughout the day.
- Avoid skipping meals. Try to eat or drink something nourishing every 1-2 hours. Try a few mouthfuls even when you're not hungry.
- Avoid overfilling your plate as this may put you off eating.
- Avoid low-fat or diet foods at this time.
- Stronger flavours may help tempt your appetite.
- If there are times in the day when your appetite is best, try to eat your bigger meal at those times.
- Try to avoid drinking too much tea/coffee/juice/water close to or during meals.
- Nourishing drinks (see overleaf) are a good way to get in some extra energy and protein.
- If you can only manage certain foods, continue to eat them. Do not worry if you lack variety for now.

If you are experiencing shortness of breath or are feeling very tired:

- Try soft foods that don't require much chewing and are easy to swallow.
- Nourishing drinks can be useful.
- Take your time when eating.
- If cooking, try to cook in bulk and freeze extra portions for the days when you're feeling more tired. See below.

If you have diarrhoea:

- Keep yourself hydrated.
- Always discuss your symptoms with your GP.
- Avoid foods/drinks that may upset your gut.
- High fat foods/spicy foods/alcohol may worsen diarrhoea.
- Avoid foods/drinks which cause wind/pain. Fizzy drinks, chewing gum and some vegetables (onions, beans, peas and cabbage) can often trigger such symptoms.
- Reducing your fibre intake at this time may help.

Are you experiencing reduced sense of taste or smell?

- Dishes may need more seasoning. Try adding herbs, spices, pepper, chutneys or pickles in cooking.
- Taste and smell preferences can change. Re-try foods that you've previously stopped enjoying.
- Trial different textured foods or colder foods that may be more enjoyable.

RESOURCES

Try to keep track of your weight. You can access a self-assessed malnutrition screening tool here: www.malnutritionselfscreening.org/self-screening.html

If you are finding it difficult to access food or your mood has been affected by Covid-19 you can contact the Citizens Information Phone Service on 0761-07-4000.

ALONE Covid-19 support line for older people:
0818-222-024 (Monday to Friday 8am-8pm)

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Try to have high protein foods (e.g. meat, poultry, fish, eggs, cheese, nuts, beans, pulses, tofu) with a starchy food (e.g. rice, pasta, spaghetti, bread, potatoes) at each meal.

Breakfast Suggestions*:

- Porridge made with full fat milk or protein milk instead of water. Add toppings like Greek/full fat yoghurt, honey, seeds, ground flaxseeds, peanut butter or cream.
- Cereal/granola with fortified, full-fat milk or full-fat yoghurt: consider adding honey, ground flaxseeds, seeds.
- Toast with thickly spread butter/jam/peanut butter.
- Scrambled eggs (made with full-fat milk), beans and toast.
- Omelette with extra cheese.
- Bagel with cream cheese and salmon/peanut butter/hummus.
- French toast, pancakes or waffles with toppings of choice.

Lunch/Dinner Suggestions*:

- Add extra full-fat spreads and condiments to meals. Examples include; cream/cheese/pesto/butter/peanut butter/hummus/honey/guacamole/mayonnaise/salad cream/natural or Greek yogurt.
- Add butter, olive oil, double cream or grated cheese to mashed potato/vegetables.
- Add cream, olive oil or grated cheese to soups, casseroles, etc.

Snacks*:

- Sweet: rice pudding, custard, full-fat yoghurt with honey or granola/seeds, flapjacks, frozen yoghurt, cereal bars, scones or banana bread.
- Savoury: cheese on toast, crackers and cheese, breadsticks/crackers with hummus/guacamole, handful nuts, trail mix, nut butter on toast, full-fat natural yoghurt or savoury scone.

Drinks*:

- Aim for 6-8 glasses of fluid per day, or more if you have a fever. Avoid large fluid intake at mealtimes as this may reduce your food intake.
- Try to take more nourishing drinks such as full fat milk, protein milk, chocolate milk, hot chocolates, malt drinks, lattes and milkshakes.
- Try some homemade smoothies using full-fat milk or yoghurt as a base. Milk, peanut butter & banana work well together.

VITAMINS & MINERALS

Speak to your GP if you are struggling with fruit and vegetables. They may suggest a multivitamin. As most of our vitamin D comes from sunshine, cocooning and self-isolation may reduce vitamin D levels. Speak to your GP about a vitamin D supplement.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is important to help maintain strength and minimise muscle loss. Once you're able to, try some light isolated exercise daily in line with Government guidelines. Don't over-do it too soon and always follow the advice of a healthcare professional.

ORAL NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS (ONS)

Your GP may recommend an ONS to optimise your nutritional intake and to achieve a healthy weight. These are drinks containing a concentrated source of protein, energy, vitamins and minerals to suit individual preferences. ONS come in many different flavours/styles/sizes. They are often best served chilled and should be taken in addition to meals and snacks. Always follow your GPs advice on ONS.