

Ask the Expert: Nutrition During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Written by Caroline Parker; Purdue University Dietetics and Nutrition, Fitness, and Health



Practicing healthy habits during the Coronavirus pandemic, including eating a well-balanced diet and being physically active, is very important to staying healthy. Eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, protein, and healthy beverages like water and low-fat milk can help you build a stronger immune system to avoid the risk of chronic illness. During this time, focus on eating a variety of foods from each of the food groups (fruit, vegetables, grains, dairy, protein) to get the vitamins and nutrients your body needs. Here are 6 tips for staying healthy during this time.

1. Eat food from each food group every day. Try to consume 2 cups of fruit, 2.5 cups of veggies, 6 ounces of grains, 5.5 ounces of protein, and 3 cups of dairy. 1 ounce of grains is equal to 1 slice of bread, or 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal. 1 ounce of protein is equal to 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, 1 egg, or 1/4 cup cooked beans.
2. Drink enough water. Drink 8-10 cups daily. Water is important for transporting nutrients and compounds throughout the body, regulating body temperature, getting rid of body waste, and cushioning joints.
3. Eat moderate amounts of fat and oil. Choose unsaturated fats found in fish, avocado, nuts, and olive oils over saturated fats found in butter, cheese, and fatty meat. When at the store, purchase low-fat or reduced-fat dairy products.
4. Eat less salt and sugar. Limit soft drinks, fruit juices, and salty snack foods to lower intake of salt and sugar. Try eating fresh fruit for dessert instead of cookies, cake, or chocolate, and consider not eating other foods that have added sugars in your diet. The goal is to limit your daily salt intake to less than 5 grams, which is about 1 teaspoon.
5. Avoid eating out. This is a simple way of reducing your chances of being exposed to COVID-19. In restaurants, it is difficult to maintain social distancing, and to know whether hands and surfaces are being washed regularly.
6. Participate in regular physical activity and try to get enough sleep. Physical activity and sleep have been shown to combat disease, improve mood, and boost energy. Aim to get in about 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week.

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Food Safety: Shop and Eat Safely

Written by Ashlyn Burns; Master of Public Health Student, Purdue University

It is important to shop, order, and prepare food properly in order to prevent the spread of illnesses such as Coronavirus. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus is not likely to spread through food itself; however, the virus causing Coronavirus and other viruses are known to survive on surfaces and objects for a certain amount of time. There are simple steps you can take to reduce the chances of getting sick.

Shopping: Always use wipes at the store to clean all surfaces of the cart you touch. Remember to use social distancing practices and stay at least 6 feet away from other shoppers. After shopping, make sure to use sanitizer and wash your hands as soon as possible.

Take out: When ordering food from restaurants, the best way to minimize risk is to limit your contact with the workers. Order food ahead of time and prepay so that you can pick up your food or have it delivered with little to no contact. Moving the meal onto a plate, disposing of all the packaging, and then washing your hands with soap and water before eating can also help limit the chance of spreading the virus.

Food prep: Before prepping food, let all non-perishable items sit for 3 days. Wash the containers of perishable food items with a small amount of soap and water before putting them away. Rinse fresh produce thoroughly under running water and remember to follow general food safety guidelines for handling food when cooking.

If you are having trouble finding groceries during this time, also note that some food pantries are now offering no-contact options such as drive-thru grocery pick-ups. Contact your local food pantry to find out if they have new policies before visiting.

Fruit Kabobs With Yogurt Dip

Ingredients (8 servings)

- 1 cup apple chunks*
- 1 cup peach chunks*
- 1 cup orange chunks*
- 1 cup strawberries, stemmed
- 2 kiwi, peeled and quartered
- 8 skewers
- 1 cup yogurt, light strawberry

Instructions

1. Place fruit chunks on skewers however you like.
2. Serve kabobs with yogurt on the side.
3. Enjoy!



Nutrition Facts (per serving)
 Calories: 61
 Protein: 2g
 Carbs: 14g

*Available from TEFAP Note: Exchange the fruits for any of your favorite!

Sources: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/fruit-kabobs-yogurt-dip>, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2020/03/25/food-safety-nutrition-and-wellness-during-covid-19/>

Eating Right: Immune Boosting Foods

Written by Christina Wilder; Third Professional Year PharmD, Purdue University

Keeping a strong immune system can help you recover faster when, or if, you do get sick. Incorporating nutrient-rich foods into your diet and practicing healthy behaviors play a key role in maintaining your immune system.

Key Nutrient	Example Foods
Beta Carotene	Plant foods like sweet potatoes, spinach, carrots, mango, broccoli, tomatoes
Vitamin C	Citrus fruits, berries, melons, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli
Vitamin D	Fish, eggs, milk, and 100% juices fortified with vitamin D
Zinc	Animal products such as beef and seafood, wheat germ, beans, nuts, tofu
Probiotics (good bacteria that promote health)	Cultured dairy products and fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, cheese, sauerkraut, pickles, and sourdough bread
Protein	Milk, yogurt, eggs, beef, chicken, seafood, nuts, seeds, beans, and lentils

Tips for buying fruits and vegetables:

Fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and veggie products are all great options. Frozen and canned foods are usually frozen or canned within hours after picking and are packed at their peak freshness with lots of vitamins and nutrients. Canned foods are a convenient and affordable way to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet, and last 1 to 5 years on the shelf due to the canning process. Purchasing canned foods may be a good way to limit waste if fresh produce tends to go bad before you are able to use it.

When purchasing canned fruit, pick varieties that are canned in water, 100% juice, or in their own juices rather than syrups with added sugars. Choose canned vegetables that are labeled “no salt added” or “low sodium”. Keep in mind that, “reduced sodium” levels are not necessarily sodium-free. A good tip to help reduce sodium content is to drain and rinse canned beans and vegetables.



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This newsletter is edited by Caroline Parker and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In The News: How To Help

Written by Lydia Conner; Coordinated Program in Dietetics, Purdue University '21

Across the United States, food banks are helping people that have been affected by Coronavirus. Feeding America, a national organization of food banks, is helping communities by:

- Launching the Coronavirus Response Fund to provide support for food banks and the people who the food banks serve, which helps food banks to purchase self-stable foods, provide meals more safely, fuel mobile pantries, and purchase safety equipment.
- Working with government leaders to make sure federal nutrition programs have support and flexibility during this time.
- Ensuring that each of 22 million children who normally rely on school for their meals have access to food outside of the classroom by working with school districts and local government agencies.
- Stocking up on emergency food boxes to distribute to food banks where extra food assistance is needed.
- Supporting local response efforts by providing emergency grants to food banks.
- Safely distributing food and non-food household items like cleaning supplies, diapers, and personal care products.

Donating time, money and food products helps food banks to support their communities. Follow your local food bank on social media and share what they are doing with your friends. Continuing to follow public health guidelines and advocating for emergency hunger relief are helpful ways to support your community's food bank.

Sources: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/coronavirus>, <http://paintpal.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Please-Give-Image.jpg>

