

Common Nutrition Questions during COVID-19 Pandemic

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- **Is there a food or supplement that can prevent or cure COVID-19?**
 - There is no single food or supplement that can prevent or cure COVID-19. Selling unauthorized health products or making a false or misleading claim to prevent, treat, or cure COVID-19 is illegal in Canada. When it comes to diet, vitamins A, C, D, E, B2, B6, and B12 as well as folic acid, iron, selenium and zinc are all involved in the function of a healthy immune system. These nutrients are found in a variety of foods and you do not need supplementation unless you have a known deficiency. The best thing to do for your immune system is to eat a balanced diet which includes protein (meat, fish, poultry, dairy, legumes, tofu, eggs), fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Further information can be found from [Canada's Food Guide](#). If you have specific nutrition needs, it is important that you follow the advice of your dietitian, doctor, or nurse practitioner.

- **Is it ok to eat for comfort reasons?**
 - Yes! These are stressful times we are going through and sometimes we need to do what we can to help manage our stress and sometimes that means going for some comfort food. It is a form of self-care. That being said, however, it can be a problem if that is the only way you deal with difficult emotions.
 - If you feel that is something you struggle with trying other coping mechanisms may help. Next time you feel like going to food in response to comfort, stop and ask yourself:
 - What emotion am I experiencing?
 - What do I need right now to help me feel better?
 - You might be surprised that food may not be the answer. Sometimes we eat to fulfill a need that is not being met. Food can help but it does not in the long-run. Some suggestions that can provide comfort are:
 - Journaling – can help with reflecting on your thoughts or get to the core of what is going on with your emotions
 - Get some fresh air (if you do not have to be quarantined)
 - Call or Facetime a loved one
 - Catch up on some reading
 - Try following some [yoga videos](#)
 - Listen to music
 - Watch a favourite movie or tv show
 - Tidy up around the home
 - Have some compassion for yourself. Remember it is ok to go for comfort food once in awhile. If you do, enjoy it without judgement. It is a normal response to find comfort in food.

- **Can I get sick from COVID-19 by touching food or food packaging?**

- There is no evidence that the virus is passed along through food however, it can stay on surfaces. For that reason, it is important that you be mindful when grocery shopping by doing the following:
 - Try to only touch a product if you plan to buy it
 - Keep your distance from others
 - Bring hand sanitizer to use when entering and exiting the grocery store
 - Respect seniors shopping hours (weekdays 9 – 10 am and Saturday 8:30 – 9:30 am)
 - Make a list of what you need so you will have to make less trips to the store
 - ***If you have recently returned from outside of Canada, STAY HOME. Request for someone else to get your essentials for you.
 - Wipe down the packaging and wash your hands as soon as you finish handling your grocery bags
 - Wash food well before eating
 - Refrigerate food within 2 hours after it has been cooked. Leftovers are ok to eat within 3 days or can be put in the freezer for later use

- **What could I do to prepare for COVID-19 food-wise?**

You can prepare for a possible pandemic by ensuring you have an adequate supply of food.

These foods are good to have on hand if you cannot get to the grocery store for a couple of weeks.

You do not need to buy all of these items at once and you should not buy foods that you will not use.

<p>Vegetables and Fruits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potatoes • Sweet potatoes • Carrots • Onions • Turnip/rutabaga • Winter squash • Canned vegetables (corn, tomatoes, mushrooms, carrots, peas, etc) • Shelf-stable soups • Tomato sauce • Tomato paste • Canned fruit (peaches, pineapple, mandarin oranges, etc) • Applesauce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock vegetables and fruits that won't spoil quickly • Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruits can all be healthy options • Choose frozen vegetables and fruits without: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ added sugars ○ added seasonings ○ breading or rich sauces • You can add frozen vegetables and fruits to soup or chili • Choose canned vegetables with little to no added sodium • Drain and rinse canned vegetables to lower the sodium content • Choose canned fruit with little to no added sugars
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<p>Grains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasta • Rice • Oatmeal • Quinoa • Barley • Bulgur • Cereal • Crackers • Bread products that freeze well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain foods have more fibre than refined grains • Choose grain foods that are lower in salt and sugar
<p>Protein Foods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried or canned beans, peas, and lentils • Nuts • Seeds • Frozen meats and poultry • Frozen or canned fish • Shellfish • Eggs • Milk • Powdered milk • Yogurt • Cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock plant proteins like beans, peas, lentils, nuts, and seeds since they don't spoil quickly • Choose canned or packaged foods with little to no added sodium • Drain and rinse canned beans, peas, and lentils to lower the sodium content • Keep extra meat, poultry, and fish in the freezer
<p>Other Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant cereal • Formula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if you are breastfeeding, it can be helpful to have formula on hand in case you are not able to breastfeed for some reason

It is also a good idea to have extra stores of:

- pet food
 - toilet paper
 - facial tissue
 - feminine hygiene products
 - diapers (if you have children who use them)
- The reason for stocking up on these items is not necessarily because you will need to self-isolate. Having these supplies on hand will ensure you do not need to leave your home at the peak of the outbreak or if you become ill.

Reference:

1) Aragon, A.A., Schoenfeld, B.J., Wildman, R. *et al.* International society of sports nutrition position stand: diets and body composition. *J Int Soc Sports Nutr* 14, 16 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12970-017-0174-y>