

Safe Food Preparation and Healthy Eating During COVID-19

Balanced and nutritious foods and beverages are an important strategy to stay healthy for people of all ages. The current COVID-19 pandemic presents some challenges for meal preparation. Use the following guidelines to stay as safe and healthy as possible. People at highest risk for complications from COVID-19 are individuals who are elderly (60 years or older), those with chronic diseases (diabetes, heart disease, and chronic lung disease), or those with compromised immune function (cancer, auto-immune disease, HIV+).

General Recommendations

- Avoid public gatherings and maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet.
- Use good personal hygiene (hand washing, not touching face).
- Practice food safety techniques (see tips below)
- Eat a variety of nutritious foods (see ideas below)
 - Choose nutrient-dense foods
 - Limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats (butter, cream, red meat)
 - Limit salt by reducing added salt and processed foods
- Limit snacking between meals
 - Choose healthy snacks when hungry to reduce unnecessary calories
 - Limit intake of overly processed frozen meals/snacks, beverages with excessive added sugars, and *junk food* (snack chips, candy, cookies, etc.)

Extra Precautions for High Risk Individuals:

- Avoid populated places: grocery stores, markets, farmers markets, convenience stores, and restaurants.
- Prepare meals at home.
- Use prepackaged foods and beverages if needed.

Food Safety Tips

1. Practice good hand washing before preparing any foods
2. Clean all food preparation and cooking areas
3. Wash fruits and vegetables (a food grade produce cleaner is recommended)
4. Prepare and store all foods at recommended temperatures
 - a. Store food at below 40 degrees Fahrenheit
 - b. Cook foods to at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit before serving
5. Monitor expiration dates on perishable goods. Rotate and use food items based on expiration dates.

Eat a Variety of Nutritious Foods

Eat a balanced diet that includes protein, fruits & vegetables, and whole grains or starches. Whenever possible, choose fresh or frozen versions of foods. Fresh and frozen foods contain the most nutrients and contain fewer additives and preservatives.

Protein	Fruits & Vegetables	Starches
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dried & canned beans• Lentils• Quinoa• Nuts, Nut butters, and seeds• Cheese• Eggs• Low sodium canned or frozen meats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh and frozen varieties• Low sodium canned vegetables• Canned fruits packed in natural juice (not syrup)• Spaghetti sauce without added sugar• 100% fruit and vegetable juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potatoes and other tubers (ex: yams, jicama)• Brown Rice• Corn• Whole grain bread and crackers• Whole grain pasta

Get the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

Frequently Asked Questions

- I'm under quarantine but *not* infected. Should I change my eating habits?
 - We hope that you are being active even while quarantined. If you are not as active you will want to limit snacking, adjust your meal serving sizes, and consume nutrient dense, lower calorie foods and beverages like fruit, vegetables and water.
- Will eating healthy help prevent me from getting the virus?
 - An intake high in essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants is associated with a healthier immune system. Include fruits and vegetables at every meal and consider a daily, age-appropriate multivitamin.
- Are there precautions I should take?
 - **The most important strategy to prevent infection is to avoid coming into contact with others who are infected with COVID-19.**
- What if my kids are home with me?
 - Being active and creative with kids is the most fun of all! Prepare meals together. Try making healthy foods from scratch. Children can assist with making pasta and breads while learning food science. Children can also act as Sous Chefs prepping foods to be cooked.
- What if I start to experience symptoms?
 - Those experiencing symptoms should follow the CDC recommendations. As these recommendations are changing, below is a link to the CDC Symptoms webpage <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html>
- I'm under quarantine and infected. Should I change my intake?

Stay hydrated with water, 100% natural juice, and tea. Liquids, sugar-free popsicles, and chilled puree fruit can help to sooth a sore throat. Enjoy the comfort foods that also offer you nutrients, such as chicken noodle soup and broths. Saltine crackers, soda water and ginger can help to settle nausea.

For more information or to schedule a lifestyle medicine consultation:

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