

Nutrition and Hydration Tips on your Road to Recovery from COVID-19 at Home

Unintentional weight loss during illness is a sign that the body is losing fluids and using fat and muscle for energy and protein, in order to try and maintain normal functioning. However, losing fluids and breaking down fat and muscle can impact your body's ability to fight illness and recover. Hydration and nutrition play an important role in your body's response to, and recovery from, the COVID-19 virus and are an essential part of your medical treatment.



What You Need to Do

Even though you may not be hungry or thirsty, it is important that you continue to eat food and drink fluids to support your body's immune system. Here are some tips to help keep your body hydrated and nourished.

Tips for Hydration

✓ Drink water or clear liquids every hour

You need to replace your body's fluid losses and thin your respiratory secretions. When you are dehydrated, your respiratory secretions thicken and are hard to clear from your lungs.



Signs of dehydration: Increased thirst, dark coloured urine, reduced urine output, dry mouth, increased heart rate, tiredness and confusion.

Increase your fluid intake as needed to ensure that you are passing light yellow urine every 3-4 hours.

Consider the following:

- Take frequent small sips of liquids every few minutes if you are not able to drink a lot of fluid at one time.
- Use a variety of liquids to avoid taste fatigue.
- Keep liquids at your bedside to sip during the night.

If you are vomiting or have diarrhea, make sure you are drinking an oral rehydration solution in addition to water. These are clear liquid beverages that have added nutrients like: calories, electrolytes and minerals. These drinks can help replace important nutrients that your body has lost during this time.

Some examples of appropriate rehydration solutions which you can purchase:

- Gatorade
- Pedialyte
- Boost Fruit Beverage (from a pharmacy)
- Powerade
- Electrolyte Gastro
- Gastrolyte
- Hydralyte

Adapted from Aspen For patients recovering at home Nutrition and Hydration:
Key weapons in the fight against COVID-19



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Homemade Rehydration Drink Recipe

Mix the following in a pitcher:

- ½-¾ tsp salt
- 1 cup juice (orange, grape, apple, cranberry)
- 3 ½ cups water

Tips for Nutrition:

✓ Eat a High Calorie, High Protein Diet

Although you may not have much of an appetite and food may not taste the same right now, it is important that you eat. Your body needs calories and protein to maintain its normal functions. Intake of energy, especially in the form of carbohydrates, is important to protect against breakdown of muscles. Your energy needs increase by about 400-500 calories a day above your normal intake during increased stress and infection.



Calories:

- Try to eat 6 small meals/snacks per day, every 2-3 hours. Try to eat a small amount, even if you are not hungry.
- Because you have a lower appetite and your body needs energy to function and recover, it's important to eat energy dense foods.

Examples of energy dense foods: dried fruit, granola, cream, cream cheese, sour cream, nuts/seeds, nut butters, avocado, oils, butter, margarine.

Examples of energy dense drinks: milk, lattes, smoothies, milkshakes, fruit juice, or other calorie-containing beverages.



Protein:

- Try to eat 75-100grams of protein per day during this time of illness.

Examples of protein rich sources: peanut or nut butters, nuts/seeds, milk, eggs, yogurt, cheese, meat/fish/poultry, legumes (chickpeas, lentils, beans, dips like hummus), tofu, protein shakes.



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High Protein Snack Ideas:

Snacks with 5 grams of protein or more	Snacks with 10 grams of protein or more
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hardboiled egg drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with freshly ground black pepper • cheese string + crackers • 2 tablespoons peanut butter (pair with sliced apples) • ¼ cup shredded cheddar melted on a tortilla or a handful of tortilla chips • ¼ cup nuts + ¼ cup dried fruit • ½ cup trail mix with mostly nuts • ¼ cup hummus dip + pita bread • 1 ounce natural turkey jerky • 1 slice Swiss cheese + handful of grapes • 2 slices deli turkey (roll with lettuce and Dijon mustard) • 175g cup of yogurt • ½ cup Greek yogurt (topped with frozen raspberries and blackberries) • ¼ cup cooked lentils mixed with diced avocados and salsa (pair with whole grain pita chips) • hard-boiled egg and crackers • granola bar (at least 5g protein) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 175g cup flavored Greek yogurt • 1 cup edamame pods sprinkled with flaked sea salt • 1/3 cup tuna salad (pair with whole grain crackers) • ¼ cup cottage cheese + fruit (i.e. mango, avocado, pineapple) • 1-ounce diced canned chicken breast tossed with light mayo and hot sauce (pair with crackers) • 12-ounce latte <div data-bbox="961 961 1352 1222" data-label="Image"> </div>

High Protein Shake Recipe

- ¾ cup full fat yogurt (Greek yogurt may have more protein)
- 1 cup whole milk
- 2 tbsp peanut butter
- Fresh or frozen fruit to taste (1/2 banana, ½ cup mango, ½-1cup berries)

Blend all ingredients together and add more milk if needed to achieve desired thickness.

Provides about 12 grams of protein and 200 calories per cup. Makes about 2 ½ cups.

If you need more ideas or support please speak to a Registered Dietitian.

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✓ Consider Oral Nutritional Supplements

When you do not feel hungry or are too tired to eat enough regular food, oral nutritional supplements are a good choice. These ready-to-drink beverages contain a wide range of nutrients that your body needs including energy, protein, fat as well as vitamins and minerals. These drinks are typically more complete than oral rehydration drinks. They can be purchased at the grocery store or pharmacy.

Examples of oral nutritional supplements: Ensure, Boost or similar meal replacement store-brand products.

Tips for including oral nutrition supplements in your diet:

- Sip them chilled throughout the day.
- Use a variety of flavours to avoid taste fatigue.
- Add additional servings of oral nutrition supplements when you are unable to eat regular foods.

Weight loss is a sign of the continued loss of body fluids, fat, and muscle. The loss of muscle will make you feel weaker and may affect your ability to get out of bed, walk, and perform your activities of daily living. Rebuilding lost muscle mass takes a long time so preventing muscle loss during illness will optimize your recovery.

✓ Tips for Eating Alone

- Try sharing a “virtual” meal with a friend, neighbour or family member through platforms like: Facetime, Skype or Zoom.
- Eat at the table- set the table, put on music.

✓ Tips for Eating When you are Short of Breath

- Eat small portions of energy and protein rich foods more often throughout the day.
- Choose softer, moist foods that are easier to chew and swallow.
- Take your time during eating.

✓ Tips for Taste or Smell Changes

If the taste or smell of food is interfering with your intake, consider the following tips:

General tips

- Rinse your mouth before and after eating to help clear the taste buds. You can try using club soda or different solutions of salt, baking soda and water.
- Try foods or beverages that are different than the ones you usually consume.
- Suck on sugar-free lemon candies or mints, or chew gum, which can help get rid of unpleasant tastes that may remain after eating.



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If your food tastes bland:

- Citrus fruits, such as oranges or lemons, can help stimulate the taste buds.
- Try foods with strong flavours, such as chili, spaghetti sauce, bacon, pizza, pickled foods, barbecued chicken or other barbecued or grilled foods.
- Season foods with onion, garlic, chili powder, basil, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, vinegar, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup or mint. Seasonings may make the foods taste better.
- Marinate meats with teriyaki sauce, Italian dressing or fruit juice. If red meats don't taste good, try other sources of protein, such as chicken, eggs, fish, peanut butter, beans or dairy products.

If your sense of smell or taste are more sensitive:

- Try bland foods, such as eggs, cheese, cooked cereal, puddings, toast, rice and cream soups.
- Serve foods cold or at room temperature to reduce strong tastes and smells. Examples: cheese, milkshakes, cold cuts, tuna or egg salad.
- Eliminate cooking smells by using an exhaust fan, cooking on a BBQ or buying pre-cooked foods.

Coping with metallic tastes

- Try using plastic cutlery and glass cooking pots if foods have a metallic taste.
- Tart flavours from lemons and other citrus fruits, vinegar and pickled foods may also be helpful to overcome a metallic taste.
- Sprinkle a little more sugar and salt on food. Sugar and salt decrease metallic tastes.

Coping with bitter tastes

- Try adding a little honey, artificial sweetener or sugar to decrease the salty, bitter or acid taste of foods.
- Add sweet fruits to meals.
- Drink ginger ale or mint tea to cover up bitter tastes and help in swallowing food.
- Marinate meat, poultry or fish in wine, pineapple or lemon juice, soy sauce or barbecue sauce. If red meat tastes bitter, try substituting with chicken, fish, seafood, eggs or cheese. Use these foods in casseroles or stews.

Coping with sweet tastes

- Try adding a little salt or lemon juice to lower the sweetness of foods that taste sugary.
- Sometimes herbal tea, if held in the mouth for a short time before eating, can help decrease sweet tastes.
- Limit sweet fruits or try vegetables.
- Try diluting fruit juices or other sweet drinks with water or ice.

If you need more ideas or support please speak to a Registered Dietitian.



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Activity during Recovery

These dietary strategies along with regular exercise, will help you regain strength and energy that you lost during your illness and help you get back to your normal activities.

For ideas and videos on being active at home visit:

www.haltonhills.ca/initiatives/activelivingstrategy.php

If you need more ideas or support with exercise, speak to a Registered Kinesiologist or qualified exercise professional.

Nutritious Recipe:

Apple Oatmeal with an Egg Boost

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 2 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 egg
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1/3 cup quick-cooking oats
- 1 tsp sugar
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- Dash of salt (optional)
- ¼ cup plain or vanilla yogurt



Directions:

1. Beat the egg and milk in a 2-cup microwave-safe bowl until blended.
2. Stir in the oats, apple, sugar, cinnamon and salt
3. Microwave on high until the liquid is absorbed and the egg is set, 1 ½ to 2 minutes.
4. Stir and top with yogurt. Garnish with additional chopped apples if you wish.

Tip: You can also add some other fruits as well as nuts or seeds

Source:

<https://oldwayspt.org/recipes/apple-cinnamon-oatmeal-egg-boost>

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Primary Care Dietitians' Association
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