

# Nourish Your Body Through COVID-19: Recommendations From Your Dietitian to Eat Well and Feel Good



By Shelby Scott Oster, MS, RD, LDN  
Food Allergy Center at MGHfC

Good nutrition is the key to your health, especially when it comes to boosting your immune system to protect you from germs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to continue eating as many healthy foods as possible, even though certain foods may be out of stock. In this handout, learn how to store healthy foods so they last for as long as possible. You will also learn how to make a healthy shopping list and protect yourself from COVID-19 when you go grocery shopping.

## TIPS FOR FOOD STORAGE AND MEALTIMES

### Make Your Fresh Produce Stretch

- Buy fresh foods in addition to keeping non-perishable food (food that does not spoil quickly) in your cabinet.
- Use the “First in, first out” method. This means use food that is fresh or that you purchased first before using frozen or shelf-stable foods. Use fresh foods before using frozen and shelf-stable canned items.
- If you have the freezer space, prepare larger batches of your favorite healthy meals. This way, you can buy fresh produce and cook it right away to avoid waste. You will also have **nutrient dense meals** (meals with lots of healthy vitamins and minerals) available for future use.

### Take Advantage of Your Local Farmers’ Markets

- If you cannot get to the grocery store or the grocery store often runs low on fresh fruits and vegetables, order fresh produce from a local farm or farmer’s market. Farmers’ markets are open as an essential service during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide food to your community.
- Visit [www.massfarmersmarkets.org/news/take-a-bite-out-of-covid19](http://www.massfarmersmarkets.org/news/take-a-bite-out-of-covid19) to learn about local farmers’ markets that are delivering. Many are prepared to grow delicious, local food available for pickup or delivery.



### Reduce Your Sodium

- Look for low sodium (low salt) options when stocking up on canned goods. Shelf-stable foods (like canned beans) can be high in sodium. Too much sodium can make you feel dehydrated.
- Rinse vegetables and beans before cooking to get rid of extra salt.
- Consider salt-free alternatives for seasoning. This can include pepper, dried herbs, curry powder and salt-free blends.

### Eat Meals at the Table

- Eating meals together can be a great way to connect with friends and family! In our new world of social distancing, scheduling meals through Facetime®, Skype® or Zoom® is a way to continue this tradition and connect with loved ones over a shared meal.
- Try to avoid eating on the couch, in the bedroom or at your computer. Eating away from the table can encourage you to eat more than you need without realizing it.

## TIPS TO MAKE A HEALTHY SHOPPING LIST

Your family's basic shopping list should include foods from every major food group. Major food groups include vegetables, fruit, protein, whole grains and healthy fats. These foods have lots of essential vitamins, minerals and other nutrients to strengthen your immune system and protect your health.

### Beans and Legumes (Dried or Canned)

- Use beans in place of meat in any recipe. Dry beans are often less expensive, but canned beans are already cooked.
- Lentils and split peas are also a good choice for vegetable-based protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals. If buying canned, choose no salt added or low sodium options.
- Rinse beans well before eating or cooking to remove extra salt.

### *Types of Beans and Legumes*

- Red beans
- Black beans
- Kidney beans
- Navy beans
- Pinto beans
- Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- Lentils
- Split peas

### Fruit

- Choose fruit with a long shelf life (that will last a long time). Apples kept in your refrigerator will stay fresh for a month or longer. For an easy snack, slice an apple or dip it in peanut butter. Citrus fruits (like orange, clementine, grapefruit, lime or lemon) are packed with vitamin C, which keeps your immune system strong. Citrus fruits also last for 3-4 weeks if stored in the crisper of your fridge.
- Instead of throwing away rotten fruit, freeze your fruit before it goes bad. Frozen fruit is perfect for oatmeal, yogurt or smoothies. Berries, mangoes or pineapple freeze well.
- If you like dried fruit, shop for dried mango, dates, raisins, figs or apricots. Avoid the candied (sugar-coated) versions. Dried fruit is high in natural sugars.
- Freeze-dried fruit (FDF) is a healthier alternative to sweets. It is naturally crispy and bursting with natural flavor. FDF has many vitamins, minerals and fiber. It does not have many additives (like preservatives) or added sugar. Store FDF in your pantry.



### Vegetables

- Store onions and garlic in a cool, dark place. Garlic can last up to 6 months. Onions can last a little over a month.
- Store potatoes and sweet potatoes in a cool, dark and dry place. They can last up to 2 months. Many other root vegetables last a long time on the shelf. This includes such as carrots, radishes, beets and turnips. Other vegetables that keep well in cool, dark and dry places include kale, celery, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts.



### **Nuts and Nut Butters**

- **If you cannot find peanut butter, try a different nut or seed butter.** Try almond butter, sunflower seed butter, pumpkin seed butter or even watermelon seed butter. Choose unsweetened and unsalted options.
- **Eat raw nuts for protein, fiber and unsaturated fat (healthy fat).** Choose raw, unsalted and unsweetened nuts. For example, walnuts provide essential fatty acids associated with managing and reducing heart disease. Try a handful of walnuts or almonds as a mid-day snack. Add chopped nuts to salad or sprinkle on roasted vegetables, like string beans.



### **Plant-Based Milk: Almond, Soy, Oat, Coconut, Rice**

- **Many plant-based milks are stored next to the cow's milk in the dairy section.** If they are sold out, check the center aisles of the store. Many plant-based milks are shelf-stable for up to 6 months unopened. They can also be used to make baked goods, oatmeal, overnight oats and more. Choose unsweetened and unflavored milks. They are the most versatile, so you can add them to whatever you like.

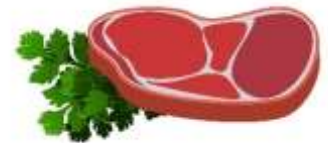
### **Protein**

#### ***Canned Fish and Shellfish***

- **Good sources of protein and healthy fats include canned clams, tuna, anchovies, sardines, salmon and mackerel.**
- **To reduce extra fat, choose fish and shellfish canned in water instead of oil.**
- **Buy frozen fish in bulk.** They are often more affordable and last longer (about 4-6 months). You can defrost them as needed.
- **Add your favorite canned fish or shellfish to rice bowls, pastas, salads and whole grain pizza dough, wraps or bread.**

#### ***Meat Products***

- **Store meat (such as chicken, ground beef or ground turkey) in the freezer.** Chicken breast, ground beef, and ground turkey all freeze well. They can be the centerpiece of a meal or added to bulk up a dish.
- **Buy a large cut of meat (such as beef roast or pork loin) to cut into portions sizes for a family meal.** This can be a budget-friendly option to avoid extra trips to the store.



#### ***Eggs***

- **Eggs last about 4-5 weeks in the refrigerator.** They are affordable and have lots of high-quality protein.
- **Store eggs on an inner shelf of your fridge and not in the door.**

## **Whole Grains**

- **Choose whole grains more often than refine (white) grains.**  
Whole grains are healthier than refined grains. They also have lots of fiber, vitamins and minerals.
- **Choose whole grain tortillas, corn tortillas, crackers, popcorn, English muffins, oatmeal and pizza dough.**
- **Store bread in the freezer for later use.**
- **Keep whole wheat and whole grain pasta in your pantry.** You can also store gluten-free, chickpea (Banza<sup>®</sup>) and vegetable pasta in the pantry.
- **Add a vegetable to pasta dishes to add more healthy vitamins and minerals.**
- **Store rice and other whole grains (such as farro or quinoa) in your pantry for up to 6 months.** They are good sources of B vitamins and iron. Hot or cold, pastas dishes can be very versatile. Make sure to add a vegetable!



## ITEMS TO KEEP IN YOUR PANTRY

### Healthy Fats

- Extra virgin olive oil
- Canola oil

### Flavor Boosters

- Spices and dried herbs
- Vinegar
- Low-sodium beef and chicken stock
- Bouillon cubes
- Salsa
- Tomato paste
- Pure vanilla extract
- Coconut milk
- Whole wheat or whole grain breadcrumbs

### Sauces and Spreads

- Diced or crushed tomatoes
- Tomato sauce
- Fruit jam or preserves

### Baking Essentials

- Whole wheat or whole grain flour
- Sugar
- Brown sugar
- Baking powder
- Baking soda
- Semisweet chocolate chips

### Whole Grain Sides and Snacks

- Rolled oats
- Rice
- Crackers



## HOW TO PREPARE AND STORE FOOD DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Grocery shopping may be more stressful than in the past. It is normal to feel stressed by all the changes to our food system. There might be new store rules, changed store hours, lines to get in the grocery store and uncertainty around what food will be in stock. Here are some recommendations to make the most of your shopping experience:

### **Before Grocery Shopping**

- Make a list by category and aisle to lessen the amount of time you spend in the grocery store. Use general terms on your list like “bread” or “fruit” because the store may be out of more specific items.
- Do not bring reusable grocery bags. Germs (including COVID-19) can live on the surface of the bags.
- Pack hand sanitizer, cleaning wipes, grocery list and a mask.
- Wash your hands before you leave the house.

### **While Grocery Shopping**

#### ***Keep It Clean***

- Bring hand sanitizer to the grocery store. Use it as needed to keep your hands clean.
- Wipe down your grocery cart/basket with cleaning wipes approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Visit [www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](http://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2) see which cleaning wipes are approved by the EPA.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands.

### ***Protect Yourself and Others***

- Follow the social distance rule of staying at least 6 feet from fellow shoppers and employees.
- Wear a mask while shopping. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends wearing a mask to cover your mouth and nose when in public. Recent studies show that people who have COVID-19 can spread the disease even if they do not have symptoms.
- Take a breath, smile and wave to your fellow shoppers 6 feet away.

### ***Buy Only What You Need***

- Buy 1 weeks-worth of groceries. Our nation’s food supply is not at risk of shortages. However, buying weeks or months of supplies at once will create a burden on our food system causing shortages.



### ***Did You Know...?***

It is normal for many people to feel uncertain or nervous about grocery shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic. You do not need to worry about catching COVID-19 through food. COVID-19 is not spread through food or food packaging.

### After Grocery Shopping

While research show that COVID-19 is not spread through food or food packaging, following the steps below will help protect you, your family and others from COVID-19:

1. Upon returning home from shopping, place grocery bags on the floor.
2. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water.
3. Remove food from the shopping bag. Throw away or recycle shopping bags
4. Put food away. There is no need to throw away or sanitize food packaging or fresh produce with soap or disinfectant.
5. After putting away food, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water.
6. Sanitize any surface that the shopping bag touched.



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## Food Allergy Program

**MassGeneral Hospital for Children**  
MGH Professional Office Building  
275 Cambridge Street, Suite 530  
Boston, MA 02116

[www.massgeneralforchildren.org](http://www.massgeneralforchildren.org)

For more information please call

**617-643-6834**