

## Maintaining Good Nutrition Especially During The Corona Virus



A look at the facts.

Being able to work from home and staying at home, may provide you with new challenges. Watching the news and staying informed about COVID-19, may cause your anxiety and stress levels to rise. Some of you may experience variations to your regular eating habits as there is a clear connection between stress, emotions, and eating behaviors.

There are some people who find that when feeling stress, are unable to eat. In the first day of quarantine, others may find that they have eaten four days' worth of food. Everyone responds differently to stress. If you eat in response to stress, be mindful of the amount of food that you have on hand. Ideally, you should have enough food to last one week. If you have filled your house with crackers and snacks, you may be more likely to consume these foods as you look to food to calm your fears and anxiety. We eat when foods are accessible. Put things away, and in cupboards. As the saying goes, "out of sight, out of mind."

A psychologist on television used the acronym *WIN*. Remember to focus on *What's Important Now*. Focus your energies on what can you do now, what is important, and how can you be anchored in the present. It's important to maintain a positive mindset and to find ways to better manage stress. This may include meditation, talking with a friend, journaling, exercising, and listening to music. These are a few things that you can do to take control of your feelings and behaviors.

In order to maintain good health, it is important to continue to implement and sustain healthy habits, this includes having a heart-healthy diet. This will help you to feel better and take control to ensure that you are boosting your immunity. So, what foods should you include? Here is your roadmap:

### **Eat the Rainbow- fiber is your friend!**

Purchase fruits, vegetables, high fiber breads, cereals, crackers, and/or pasta.

Fruits and vegetables can be fresh or frozen. Frozen fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh produce. If you are buying frozen fruits, they should be flash-frozen and not packed in a sugar syrup. If buying frozen vegetables, they should also be flash-frozen and not be packed in a cream, cheese, or butter sauce.

If you are including dried fruit in your diet, be mindful of portions as these can provide a lot of calories.

As you may be looking to limit trips to the store, beans and legumes are an excellent shelf-stable source of protein. Chickpeas can be mixed into salads and lentils are great for soup or to mix with whole wheat pasta or brown rice.

Whole wheat pasta, brown rice, and quinoa are always great choices. They provide protein and are a source of whole grains and fiber. These foods can be mixed with other vegetables or proteins. They can also be served as a side dish.

Popcorn kernels can be dry-popped in the microwave or popped in a pot using a heart-healthy oil such as canola oil. Popcorn makes a delicious high fiber and whole grain snack. If you have a microwave and a brown paper bag, pour the popcorn kernels into the bag. Form one scant layer. If you pour too many kernels in the bag, the popcorn will burn. Select the popcorn tab on your microwave or simply press the start button and the popcorn will pop in the bag without any fat. Don't walk away, as when the popping slows down, take it out of the microwave so that it doesn't burn. You can either spray the popcorn with butter spray or melt a healthy spread and pour that over your kernels. If desired, Sur La Table has popcorn seasonings that are available online.

Oatmeal has a great shelf life. It can be mixed with PB2 or peanut butter. It can also be prepared with milk instead of water to provide a complete protein. Remember, you can enjoy breakfast foods at any time. Oatmeal can make a satisfying and heart-healthy dinner.

High fiber cold cereals such as Shredded Wheat, Cheerios, and Puffins are heart-healthy options that will stay fresh in your cupboard for a long time.

## **Protein**

Shelf stable cans and drained packets of fish and chicken are great choices. Fresh Catch, Bumble Bee, Sunkist, and Valley Fresh, are all examples of companies that offer canned or drained salmon, tuna, and chicken. Oscar brand sells low-sodium canned sardines.

You can freeze chicken and meat. You can purchase flash frozen fish. Eggs, egg whites, and Egg Beaters, last a long time in the refrigerator and provide a high-quality source of protein.

If you do not want to venture out to the store, then shelf stable milk is an option. This is milk that does not require refrigeration. Milk is a source of protein as well as calcium and vitamin D.

Low-fat cheeses such as Laughing Cow and Baby Bel light are great to put on crackers or in dishes such as whole wheat pasta. Baby Bel light cheese can be turned on its side, sliced into thinner rounds, and then put inside a whole wheat pocket or on whole wheat bread to make a grilled cheese sandwich.

Nut butters such as peanut butter, almond butter, and sun butter are delicious and satisfying. They pair well with fruit and high fiber whole grain breads and crackers.

## **Snack Ideas**

In addition to popcorn, crackers, nuts, and nut butters, there are many things that you can snack on in between meals. Vegetables are a great snack and can be paired with a variety of dips. Baby carrots can be dipped in hummus, salsa, or mustards such as Trader Joe's Garlic Mustard Aioli Sauce. Fage 0% Greek yogurt can be mixed with garlic and chives to make a delicious sour cream like dip. To go along with the Fage dip, tortilla chips can be made by cutting whole wheat pocket bread in half and then

cutting each half into smaller triangles. Toast the wedges at 350 degrees for 3-5 minutes. Next, spray them with butter spray. Then sprinkle the wedges with Trader Joe's Everything But The Bagel Sesame Seasoning Blend. The butter spray will act as a glue for the seasoning. You can also snack on Irene's biscotti (20 calories each), Popsicle brand sugar-free popsicles (15 calories each), or Popsicle brand sugar-free fudgsicles (40 calories each). Additionally, make sure you are well hydrated throughout the day. We often confuse hunger and thirst so make sure to stay hydrated by having a glass of water or a calorie-free beverage.

A great way to add structure to your day while at home is by pre-planning your meals. I also encourage you to track your intake by using an app such as Lose It, My Fitness Pal, or Rate Your Plate by the CDC. These are all free apps that can be downloaded on your phone. To keep track of your intake, some people prefer paper and pen. If you have a computer, you can check out a website called Calorie King. This is a database that can provide you with calories, fat, sodium, and carbohydrate content of the foods that you are eating. You will then have to manually calculate your daily intake.

At this time of year, the only supplements I recommend are vitamin D (depending on your vitamin D status) and for those of you who are over the age of 50 a vitamin B-12 supplement. If you do not include fish in your diet, you may want to consider adding an omega 3 fatty acid supplement.

It is important to follow healthy practices that include washing your hands regularly. This includes when you come home from the market. Wash all your produce. Make sure to store food at the proper temperature and to cook food thoroughly. These steps will help you to boost your immunity, as we all try to stay healthy during this unprecedented time.