Healthy eating advice during the Covid-19 pandemic

There is a lot of misinformation circulating on social media about the relationship between Covid-19 and food. Our team of dietitians have put together some helpful information to help reduce confusion and promote correct nutritional information.

Following a healthy balanced diet in addition to being physically active, reducing stress and having enough sleep can help you to stay healthy during these challenging times.

Common Questions

Can I boost my immune system through my diet?

No food or supplement has been approved by the European Food Safety Authority to boost immunity or treat infections. Good hygiene and following government advice remain the best way to avoid getting Covid-19.

However, there are many nutrients that are involved in promoting a normal functioning immune system. We would advise following a healthy balanced diet in accordance with the 'Eatwell guide' to support a healthy immune system. For more information please see the Healthy Eating Food Fact Sheet here: https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/healthy-eating.html

Getting enough Vitamin D is also important for supporting a healthy immune system. The majority of this comes from sunlight rather than the foods we eat; however, during the autumn and winter months, we are advised to take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of Vitamin D. If you are self-isolating or are not spending much time in sunlight, you should consider a supplement.

How can I make the most of the food I have?

Firstly, there is **no need to stockpile** or to buy more food than you normally would. It is advised that we keep shopping trips to a minimum; however, buying too much fresh food can lead to food becoming spoilt and wasted.

Here are some tips:

- Use up food with the shortest shelf life first, e.g. fresh foods, to reduce waste.
- Tinned and frozen fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh. (Opt for tinned fruit in juice instead of syrup to reduce added sugars and choose vegetables in water.)
- Root vegetables, potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots and onions can last longer than other fresh foods.
- Remember to wash, rinse and drain salad leaves and herbs and dry before storing in a refrigerator. Storing these in a container which is covered can help them last longer.
- Check you aren't keeping foods in the fridge that don't need to be refrigerated, e.g. fresh tomatoes, un-peeled onions and un-peeled potatoes. These can be stored in a cool, dark place, creating more space in the refrigerator for fresh foods.
- If you are stuck for things to do, try reorganising cupboard contents to free up space.

- If you do become unwell, it can be worth having some easy-to-prepare meals on hand such as tinned soup, microwaveable rice, jacket potatoes or frozen meals. You could try to batch-cook meals and freeze them for when you don't feel like cooking.

How can I manage my weight whilst working from home?

Working in a new environment, such as at home, can pose several challenges if you are trying to manage your weight. Food can be easier to access, tempting us to eat more than we usually would. To help to prevent weight gain we've put together the following tips:

- Try to follow a structured eating plan consisting of balanced meals and snacks. Setting planned meal times can establish a regular eating pattern, reducing hunger. This includes starting the day with a healthy breakfast.
- Make sure you have healthy snack options to hand. This will reduce the temptation to snack on higher calorie foods. Fresh, frozen and tinned fruit (in juice) make great snacks. For more healthy snack ideas, click here: https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/healthy-snacks.html
- Remember to drink enough. Aim to drink approx. 6-8 glasses of fluid per day, preferably low-calorie and non-caffeinated drinks. To make water more flavoursome you could try adding fruits, cucumber, mint or no added sugar squash.
- Avoid eating whilst doing something else, such as working, reading or watching TV. This can lead you to overeat through mindless eating. Allowing enough time with no distractions can help us respond to our bodies' natural hunger cues.
- Include regular exercise within your working day. This is not only good for physical health – it can also support mental health.

Weight Management Leicestershire offers free, tailored support to help you reach your weight goal. To find out more and get in touch, go to https://www.leicestershirewms.co.uk/ or call 0116 305 1510. Please note the service's revised opening hours of 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

For more information on weight loss, please click here: https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/weight-loss.html

General tips for eating healthily during Covid-19:

1. Keep up your fruit and vegetable intake
2. If fresh produce is unavailable, opt for frozen or tinned options
3. Make sure you have healthy snacks to hand to keep hunger at bay
4. Stay hydrated throughout the day
5. Try to follow a routine for meals and snacks

For further support around healthy eating, go to:

https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/

https://www.bda.uk.com/

https://www.leicestershirewms.co.uk/resources/