

Nutrition Tips

to manage Covid19-related concerns

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A pandemic in the 21st century, are you kidding me? The reality has set in. The finish line keeps moving; we need to win the wait. How has the Covid-19 corona virus affected you? On many levels this virus is out of our control. But what we can control is how we look after ourselves during this challenging time and managing nutrition is critical to help get through this challenge. Conversely, has this pandemic had a positive impact on your lifestyle and/or health? Below are some of the pros and cons from living through the pandemic followed by nutrition-related action items to help you personally manage Covid-19 related concerns.

Pros of Pandemics

- Less time spent commuting to school or work (since working from home)
- More time for yourself
- More efficient use of your time throughout the day – possibly more productive?
- No rush hour and fewer green house gases emitted – saving the planet?
- Fewer purchased meals means more home-cooking (better nutrition? Cost savings?)
- Less shopping overall (possibly, unless online purchases?!)
- More time with family and housemates – usually a good thing
- Your pets are happy that you are around!

Cons of Pandemics

- Limitations around social events, exercising and freedom to go where you want to – travel!
- A lot of unknowns and the finish line keeps moving
- So many restrictions on so many levels
- Possibly less daily energy expended (i.e., less active than usual) and may impact body composition

Nutrition Tips for Coping During Covid19

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- If your daily energy expended is reduced (i.e., not as active), prompt yourself to **get up and move** at regular intervals; some like to track their daily steps taken outside of training to monitor their activity level.
- Try to **get out for some fresh air** every day, whether that is a walk, hike, bike ride or a ski. Being out with nature is critical for our mental health. Take deep, oxygenating breaths to help energize.
- If your daily energy expenditure is down (i.e., calories burned), consider **adjusting your calories consumed**. Possibly reduce your dinner portions or evening snacks.
- When working and studying from home, establish a **designated eating spot** away from your study or work area. This helps dissociate studying or work AND food.
- When it is time for a meal or snack, portion your food, sit, taste and **savour with few visual distractions** while eating. This mindful eating process allows you to get the maximum satisfaction from your nutrition and you may be satisfied with consuming less food.
- Before reaching for something to eat ask one simple question, **am I hungry?** If not, then consider what else could be increasing this urge to reach for food. What else can I do besides eat?
- **Watch for boredom eating** or eating to cope with other emotional triggers. It is common to reach for food when we are trying to feel better. Look to other activities that you can do besides eating. Make a list of non-food related activities, such as: reading; complete a puzzle; play or listen to music, do crafts; play cards or a game; go for a walk; take a bath, etc. It's all about re-programming how you may naturally respond to non-hunger appetite triggers.
- **Keep well hydrated** for optimal mental and physical energy and to control your appetite. Sometimes we forget to drink water because our routine has been changed (i.e., not sitting in class or at the worksite).
- Limit the See-Food diet. **Keep tempting foods out of sight** = out of mind. Better yet, don't bring tempting foods into your home.
- **Load up with raw veggies** for snacks and to add to your meals (especially when your meal portions are reduced). Why not purchase a tray of pre-cut veggies for ready-to-eat filler foods?
- If purchasing food, choose a restaurant or store that seems popular so the food is more likely to be fresh. **Food poisoning** can occur when retailers hang on to expired foods that should be tossed.
- Make healthy choices to support a **strong immune system**. And that means avoid very low-calorie diets as this puts stress on your body's ability to keep healthy. Load up with protein-rich foods, fresh veggies and fruits, plus just enough whole grains or legumes. Micronutrients to help your immunity include vitamins C and D, along with zinc lozenges.
- **Watch your alcohol consumption**. Alcohol is a depressant, and it prevents you from getting into deep REM (rapid eye movement) quality sleep and it may suppress your immune system. It is a source of calories and can make us more hungry. Plus, alcohol may lower your growth hormone level that is critical during your early sleep hours for optimal restoration.

Living through a pandemic is a true test of our ability to look after ourselves. Do the best that you can to take care of yourself by establishing new routines for optimal health and well-being.

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