

# Nutrition During COVID

## How does nutrition play a role in management of COVID-19 symptoms?

Nutrition plays a key role in symptom management and recovery. Everyone experiences a different combination of symptoms. Some are longer lasting or more severe than others. Let's delve into some specific nutrition tips for each.

### Low Appetite

- Aim for small regular meals
- Keep your favourite foods at hand
- Try liquid supplements

### Reduced Taste and Smell

Loss of smell affects how you detect flavours and there is evidence that taste can be affected as well. You may find your foods taste and smell differently. For example, bland, salty, sweet or metallic. These changes are usually short lived, but can significantly affect your appetite and how much you eat.

- Choose foods that appeal to you
- Keep your mouth clean and trial boiled sweets or mints between meals
- If cooking smells affect your appetite, try to get someone to prepare it for you
- Trial cold or room temperature foods
- Try experimenting with different flavours and textures e.g. bland foods may be easier to eat – particularly if you are feeling nauseous
- High protein foods can taste metallic so marinate with sweet or sour flavours
- Try adding strong flavours like herbs, spices, pickles and sauces
- Citrus flavours can help balance very sweet tastes
- Salty or bitter tastes can be improved by lowering the salt content of the meal or adding sweet flavours

### Cough

- Small sips of liquid regularly (hot or cold)
- Stay hydrated

### Shortness of Breath

Your breathe-swallow pattern will be interrupted and hence you will find eating or drinking may make you breathless momentarily. This can make it hard to swallow at times.

- Take smaller sips and mouthfuls at a slow pace
- Reduce distractions and focus on your eating
- Avoid talking while eating and drinking
- Avoid large meals and have smaller meals more often instead
- Eat at times of the day when you feel less tired



@eatsmart\_dietetics

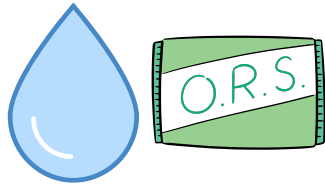


@eatsmartdietetics

## Fatigue

- Consume foods that require minimal preparation and are easy to consume (soft and moist food examples)
- Smaller more manageable meals
- Pace yourself and prioritise activities
- Get family members to prepare foods for you while you rest

# COVID-19 Nutrition Tips



Hydrate



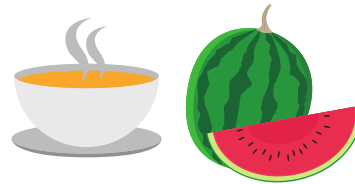
Small regular meals

## Difficulty Swallowing & Dry Mouth

- Choose moist foods
- Trial liquid meals
- Choose soft foods



Soft/Moist foods



Hydrating Foods



Liquid Meals

## Constipation/Diarrhoea

- Try and move around as much as you can
- Trial Psyllium Husk
- Stay Hydrated
- Fibre
- Laxative



Easy to Prepare



Strong flavours

## Weight Loss

With all these symptoms impacting your eating some weight loss is expected. However, if you feel that you are losing more weight than you think is healthy even after trialling all of the above methods, see your local Dietitian or GP. Losing too much muscle can greatly impact your recovery rate.

- Include some energy rich snacks such as nuts, avocado or even a glass of milk
- Choose High protein meals and snacks (eggs, red/white meats, dairy)
- Trial Enriched milk
- Custard/Yoghurts

## Hydration

This is probably one of the most important things to focus on.

- Keep your water bottle nearby
- Sip regularly throughout the day
- Add ORS to your water bottle if needed
- Avoid Alcohol



@eatsmart\_dietetics



@eatsmartdietetics

## Medication interactions

It is important to note that excess supplements can react with certain medications. For example, those taking blood thinners should be particularly careful. It is expected that when the body is under stress, sugar levels and blood pressure will rise, keep an eye on it. Additionally, certain steroid medications can result in raised sugar levels.

If you are prescribed an antibiotic, it is highly recommended to take Flora norm (probiotic) alongside it and to continue with the probiotic for one week after the antibiotic course ends. This is to ensure maintenance of gut microbes essential for health.

## Long COVID & Malnutrition

For some, once they have gotten over the immediate illness, residual symptoms such as weakness or poor appetite will remain. It is important to follow the above strategies and keep an eye on your weight.

## Hospital Nutrition

Here it is important to note that oral nutrition may be limited due to the use of oxygen or even a ventilator. In this situation, a Dietitian will work with your Health Team to assess the needs of the client. They may require tube feeding, depending on the severity of the symptoms.

## Post- Hospital Recovery

Leaving hospital after critical illness is a big step forward in your recovery. It is great that you are well enough to go home, but you might find that there are some things you find difficult. It may take some time to get back to a normal life, and things that used to be easy, seem difficult, such as being able to eat and drink like you used to.

Your body has been through a lot and it now needs the right food and drink to help your recovery. Eating well helps you to:

- have more energy as you begin to do more
- feel less tired
- avoid losing any more weight
- re-build muscle
- heal
- fight infection and have a strong immune system
- be able to deal with any side effects of any treatment you may still be having

*Authors Fathima Abdoola, APD, AN*

*If you would like to learn more kindly send us a DM. Stay safe !*



@eatsmart\_dietetics



@eatsmartdietetics