

Recovering from Covid-19

Support with eating well to help you recover from Covid-19

COVID-19 (coronavirus disease-2019) is an infectious disease, which can cause symptoms of fever, coughing, general weakness, pain, difficulty breathing as well as changes to taste and smell. These symptoms can affect your appetite and ability to eat, making it difficult for you to meet your nutritional needs. Over time, this can lead to a condition called malnutrition (undernutrition), which can slow down your recovery.

Why is nutrition important?

Your food, and nutritional intake is very important when you have COVID-19 to help you recover well and keep up your strength or return to your normal activity levels. But the symptoms can affect your appetite and ability to eat, making it difficult for you to meet your nutritional needs. If you are struggling to eat enough, or if you are losing weight or strength in your muscles, you may need to think differently about the foods you are eating.

What if my weight is normal or I'm overweight and my appetite is good?

For those who are normal weight or overweight and have a good appetite; dietary intake should be healthy and balanced. It should consist of regular meals containing:

- Protein, starchy carbohydrate and vegetables
- 5-a-day fruit and vegetable portions
- 2-3 portions of dairy or dairy alternatives
- You should aim to reduce fat, salt and sugar

For more detailed information and guidance on portion sizes of food and a healthy balanced diet please see:

- www.bda.uk.com/resource/food-facts-portion-sizes
- www.bda.uk.com/resource/healthy-eating



covid19green.pdf

How will I know if I have lost too much weight or I am not eating enough?

It is important to be aware of your weight and appetite, particularly if you are older or have a pre-existing medical condition. If you are worried about the fact you are losing weight, look at the tools below to help you work out what support you might need. If you continue to lose weight or you struggle to eat enough, even if you are overweight, it's important to contact your GP.

- You can check to see if you are losing too much weight by using the self-screening tool at
 - <https://www.malnutritionselfscreening.org>

- If you are unable to weigh yourself, be aware of other signs of weight loss (for example jewellery and clothes becoming looser). You can use the checklist from the Patients Association at

- <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=3449fca0-dc52-4f06-ac75-3050b71d7bb5>

If I am underweight, normal/overweight but losing weight unintentionally or lacking appetite what should I do?

Often after an illness you can have a small appetite or you can feel full more quickly. You may feel as though your stomach has shrunk and you don't have room for the same amount of food that you used to. This is normal and you can get back to your normal appetite and improve your dietary intake by doing the following:

Tips for Making the Most of Your Food

Eating well when you've lost your appetite can be difficult; you could try some of the ideas listed here:

- Eat more of the foods that you enjoy at the times of day when you feel more like eating
- Eat smaller meals with snacks and nourishing drinks (e.g. smoothies, soups, fruit juice, milkshakes or hot chocolate) in between
- Avoid drinking before or during meals, as the liquid can fill you up
- If you usually use low fat, low sugar 'diet' foods and drinks, switch to the non-diet ones (e.g. whole milk) and have some high energy foods such as a piece of cake, chocolate, a handful of nuts or a biscuit between meals or as a snack
- Nourishing drinks can be taken inbetween meals if your appetite is poor and you lack energy for eating. Look at some [simple recipes here](#). Powdered nutritional supplement drinks are available from most supermarkets and pharmacies, in shops and online.
- Consider taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement (go for 'A-Z' or 'Complete' types) if you are struggling with your fruit and vegetable intake. Supermarket own brands are fine.
- Consider taking a vitamin D supplement whilst you are self-isolating at home. In the UK a supplement of 10 micrograms of vitamin D a day is recommended. When possible ensure some time is spent outdoors most days as sunlight helps form Vitamin D in our bodies.

Add cheese* to	Add Skimmed Milk Powder to	Add sugar*, jam or honey to	Add ground almonds or nut butter to
Sauces (aim for milky/creamy sauces)	Milk: add four tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to each pint of full fat milk and use this in drinks, with breakfast cereals and in cooking	Cereal or porridge	Porridge
Pasta dishes/pizza	Porridge	Puddings	Vegetable soups
Soups	Mashed potato	Hot drinks	Sauces
Scrambled	Sauces	Milkshakes/smoothies	Smoothies

egg/omelettes			
Mashed potatoes	Custard	Glaze vegetables	
Beans on toast	Milk puddings		
Vegetables	Creamy soups		
	Milkshakes/smoothies		

** If there are any health concerns which have previously required you to limit fat and sugar in your diet, e.g. diabetes, heart disease or high cholesterol you should discuss whether you still need to limit these with a health professional.*

For more tips and ideas to help you get the most nutrition from your food, download the leaflet below:



17121906 -how to get more energy from

Tips for Eating When You are Short of Breath

Eating can be very challenging when you are short of breath so try to:

- Eat smaller portions of energy and protein rich foods more frequently throughout the day
- Choose softer, moist foods that are easier to chew and swallow
- Take your time during eating

Tips for Managing a Dry Mouth

Dry mouth can be caused by the use of nebulisers, inhalers and oxygen therapy. It can make it difficult to chew and swallow foods, and sometimes can lead to taste changes.

- Try to drink six to eight cups of fluid each day (including nourishing fluids such as milky drinks or juices)
- Add sauces such as gravy, mayonnaise, salad cream and cheese sauce to foods, and choose moist dishes like stews
- Suck sugar-free sweets or chew sugar-free gum to help saliva production
- Rinse and gargle with water after using an inhaler to keep your mouth fresh

If you are finding it difficult to swallow, are frequently coughing during meals or your voice becomes gargly, ask your healthcare professional to refer you to a speech and language therapist to check your swallowing and for further advice

Tips for Managing Changes to Taste and Smell

Changes to your taste and smell are common symptoms of COVID-19 and can make eating and drinking less enjoyable.

- Experiment with herbs, spices, pepper, chutneys and pickles in cooking
- If you are struggling with the strong taste of hot foods, try cold foods instead
- If you go off a particular food, try it again regularly as your tastes may continue to change

What If I am still losing weight or very underweight and finding it difficult to follow the tips to increase energy in my diet?

If you have recently been discharged from hospital, you may be struggling to manage to eat enough. Or if you are thin or feeling weak whilst at home, you may feel that you need extra nutrition to meet your needs on top of what you are able to eat and drink currently. You may need to be referred to a Dietitian for more specialist support.

Contact your GP if you are concerned and think you might need support from a Dietitian. GP's and Dietitians can assess whether you may benefit from a prescribed nutrition drinks called 'oral nutritional supplements'. You may only need oral nutritional supplements for a short time for example until you are able to eat enough to meet your needs.

Where can I get help if I am unable to do food shopping or prepare food for myself and have no support?

Social distancing, isolation and feeling unwell can make it difficult to go shopping for the foods you need and to make your normal meals at home. It can also feel less enjoyable to eat alone.

Some tips to help are:

- If you have no support for shopping or getting medicines or feel generally extremely isolated, contact Bradford Council on **01274 431000**
 - Volunteers can help by: picking up shopping medicines, delivering a hot meal or food parcel to eligible people, ringing for a friendly chat, Problem solving
- See here for more information about local volunteer groups across bradford
<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/media/5850/coronavirushelpandsupportforcommunitiesinbradforddistrict.pdf>
- People with certain medical conditions may be considered as extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 and eligible for priority supermarket deliveries. Visit <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable> for more information about how to register as a vulnerable person
- You can use meals on wheels services or home delivery services offering pre-prepared meals
 - Park Care Meals (includes hot meal delivery) <http://www.parkcaremeals.co.uk/>
 - Oakhouse foods (frozen meals) <https://www.oakhousefoods.co.uk/>
 - Wiltshire farm foods (frozen meals) <https://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com/>
 - Parsley box (meals can be stored in cupboard) <https://www.parsleybox.com/>
 - Cook <https://www.cookfood.net/>
- If you are self-isolating ask family, friends or your carer for help with your shopping, or ordering food for home delivery
 - Include convenience foods (such as tinned, dried or frozen foods) in your weekly shop as these will last longer e.g. long-life milk, savoury snacks, plain biscuits, rice puddings, corned beef, baked beans, soups, tinned puddings and custard. Useful store cupboard ideas can be found at <https://www.bda.uk.com/uploads/assets/275073a5-06cc-473fb-349ca768124e72f/200406-BDA-OPSG-Store-cupboard-Flier-V2-A4-version.pdf>

- If you are struggling to cook and prepare food or generally take care of yourself at home, the first step is to contact Bradford Social Service. If you are a resident over 18 years old please contact the Adult Services Access Point to discuss your situation: <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/adult-social-care/care-and-support-from-us/new-to-adult-social-care/> or contact on **01274 435400**.

What else might help me to get back to how I normally feel?

- Being physically active, as well as eating well, can help you get back to your normal routine.
- Activity is an important part of recovery from illness to help strengthen your lungs, make breathing easier and keep you stronger.
- Activity does not have to be strenuous – gentle exercise such as walking around the garden or exercises in the home can all help. There are lots of activity programmes online.
- If you have been given specific advice to help you to recover from your illness, continue to follow this. This may include tailored physical exercise and information that will help you to better understand and manage your health condition/s and symptoms.

Considerations for Special Diets

- If you have a health condition such as diabetes or heart disease some of the dietary advice above may not be suitable for you.
- If you have diabetes, infections such as COVID-19 may affect your blood glucose control. Visit https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about_us/news/coronavirus for information about diabetes and COVID-19
- If you are on medicines for high blood pressure, and have lost a lot of weight as a result of COVID-19, this might affect your blood pressure control
- If you need further advice please contact your specialist nurse or healthcare team.

Further Information

- British Dietetic Association - COVID-19 / Coronavirus - Advice for the General Public
- <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/covid-19-corona-virus-advice-for-the-general-public.html>

To download an advice sheet containing the information above:



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