

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Nutrition Information and COVID-19

This leaflet is aimed at patients who are having difficulties eating and drinking during COVID-19.

If you have lost weight unintentionally or have a poor appetite it is important to make the most of the foods you are eating. Nutrient dense foods and nourishing drinks can help to improve your energy intake without being overwhelmed by large amounts of food.

Protein, energy (calories), fluid, vitamins and minerals are all important for people who are malnourished.

Good nutrition, including eating enough protein, is essential to protect people's muscles including respiratory muscles to help with breathing.

### **Try to include:**

- Eat 2-3 portions of high protein foods every day such as meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans, pulses, soya, tofu and other meat-free protein foods.
- Eat/drink 2-3 portions of dairy foods every day, such as cheese, milk and yoghurt or non-dairy alternatives like soya, almond or coconut milk.
- Eat a serving of starchy food at each meal (e.g. bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta or rice).
- Eat some fruit and vegetables every day (fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced).
- If you enjoy fish, go for oily fish such as mackerel, salmon, herring, trout, pilchards or sardines as these are rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Aim for 2 portions a week (can be tinned or frozen for convenience).

### **The following simple ideas will help you to increase the amount of energy and protein which you eat each day:**

- Eat 'little and often' – try a small snack between meals and a dessert after lunch and evening meal.
- Try not to have drinks just before meals to avoid feeling too full to eat.
- Avoid low fat/diet versions of food and drinks for example skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, low fat yoghurt, sugar free drinks etc, or watery soups.
- Choose meals that you enjoy, are easy to prepare and eat, and are high in energy and protein. Items such as tinned fish or beans are easily stored and easy to prepare.
- If you are preparing food for others remember that as we get older our taste buds change. Older people may prefer much sweeter tastes than they used to.

## Fortifying your food

Fortifying food means adding small amounts of other ordinary foods to your meals and snacks to increase the nutrition, especially calories and protein.

How to fortify some common foods

<b>If you have:</b>	<b>Fortify by adding:</b>
Cereal or porridge	Fortified milk, cream, full-fat or Greek yoghurt, honey, syrup, sugar, jam, dried fruit
Scrambled eggs	Butter, fortified milk, grated cheese
Soups and stews	Grated cheese, cream, dumplings or croutons
Mashed potato	Butter, olive oil, fortified milk, grated cheese, skimmed milk powder or double cream
Cooked vegetables	Grated cheese, cream cheese or creamy sauces, olive oil, butter, mayonnaise or salad cream
Salads	Grated cheese, olive oil or salad dressing, mayonnaise or salad cream
Custard and milky puddings	Skimmed milk powder, double cream, condensed milk, honey, syrup, sugar, jam or dried fruit.

## Ideas for Nourishing Snacks

Snacks should be taken in addition to meals not instead of meals

- Cheese and crackers or digestive biscuits with butter or margarine
- Marie/Rich Tea biscuits with butter
- Slice of bread and butter and jam
- Scones with butter/cream and jam
- Crisps with dips e.g. cream cheese and chive, humus, salsa
- Mini pies/sausage roll/pasty
- Glass of chilled full cream milk flavoured with milkshake e.g. Crusha® Syrup or Nesquik®
- Individual dessert such as trifle, yogurt, crème caramel, rice pudding, junket, milk jellies, thick and creamy yoghurt, egg custard.
- Hot milky drink e.g. Ovaltine®, Horlicks® or drinking chocolate
- Buttered hot toast, crumpet, pancake, teacake or muffin with jam
- 2-3 biscuits – choose shortbread, flapjacks, cream/chocolate biscuits
- Cake e.g. sponge cake, individual apple pies, cream cake, lardy cake
- Malt loaf/fruit loaf/saffron cake with butter or margarine
- Dried fruit and nuts
- Glass of Meritene® or Complian® (available from the pharmacy or Supermarket in various sweet flavours)
- Mug of Meritene® Soup or Savoury Complian® (available from the pharmacy or supermarket in various savoury flavours)

## Fortified Milk

You can make fortified milk by adding 2-4 tablespoons of dried skimmed milk powder to 1 pint (570ml) of full fat milk and mixing it together. Keep it in the fridge and use in drinks, on cereals and for cooking. One pint of fortified milk contains similar amounts of calories and protein to two build up drinks available over the counter/on prescription.

If there are any health concerns which have previously required you to limit fat and sugar in your diet e.g. diabetes or high cholesterol, you should discuss whether you still need to limit these with a health professional. The Diabetes Dietitians team can be contacted on tel 01803 654384, E-mail [tsdft.dmwtdiet@nhs.net](mailto:tsdft.dmwtdiet@nhs.net)

### **Supplement (Nutrition) Drinks**

Some powdered nutritional drinks can be bought from your chemist or the supermarket and mixed with fortified milk or water.

If needed Dietitians can also advise on oral nutritional supplements that are prescribed by your GP.

### **Swallowing Difficulties**

If you notice any of the following when eating or drinking you should seek advice from a healthcare professional such as your GP or Practice Nurse, who can refer to on to a Specialist Speech & Language therapist.

- Difficulty swallowing
- Choking or coughing
- Shortness of breath whilst eating or drinking
- Throat clearing or a sensation that food is stuck in your throat or chest.
- A change in the sound of your voice whilst/soon after eating i.e. your voice sounds 'wet'

### **Drinks and Nourishing Drinks**

- Drinking enough is vital to maintain good health.
- If you don't consume enough fluid, you will become dehydrated. You may feel thirsty, have a dry sticky mouth and darker coloured urine. These signs are less reliable in older people and/or with some medications. Other effects of dehydration include tiredness, poor concentration, headache and dizziness or light headedness.
- Older people are vulnerable to dehydration, and they may have difficulties accessing drinks. Fear of incontinence may also mean that some older people restrict their fluid intake. This increases the risk of urine infections and falls.
- Adult men should consume approximately 2000ml fluid per day. Adult women should consume approximately 1600ml per day. You may need to drink more if you have a high temperature or if you are sweating.
- The types of drinks you choose is a matter of personal taste and preference. Tea and coffee provide water and can be a good way of keeping older adults well hydrated.

### **Vitamin D**

Vitamin D works with calcium and phosphorus for healthy bones, muscles and teeth. It is also important in protecting muscle strength and preventing rickets, osteomalacia and falls.

In normal circumstances, sunshine, not food, is where most of your vitamin D comes from. So even a healthy, well-balanced diet, that provides all the other vitamins and nutrients you need, is unlikely to provide enough vitamin D if you aren't able to get enough sun. During autumn and winter months when we spend more time indoors and the sun is weaker, adults and children over the age of one are advised to take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of Vitamin D.

If you are having to self-isolate and you are unable to go outside, you should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms to ensure a healthy vitamin D status (for adults and children over the age of one).

You can also eat plenty of vitamin D rich foods, including:

- Oily fish such as salmon, sardines, pilchards, trout, herring, kippers and eel contain reasonable amounts of vitamin D.
- Cod liver oil contains a lot of vitamin D, but don't take this if you are pregnant.
- Egg yolk, meat, offal and milk contain small amounts, but this varies during the seasons.
- Margarine, some breakfast cereals, infant formula and some yoghurts have added vitamin D.

## **Ready Meals, Meal Delivery Services and Online Shopping**

You may find that your energy levels change throughout the week and that on some days you feel better than others. Make the most of the 'good days' by preparing extra meals which you can store in the fridge/freezer as individual portions for 'bad days.' Buy a selection of fresh or frozen ready meals for times when you are not able to cook.

### **Extremely Vulnerable Patients Who are Shielding at Home**

Social isolation increases the risk of malnutrition and dehydration. If you have a [medical condition which makes you extremely vulnerable to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable), you can register with the government <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>. You may have received a letter from the NHS telling you that you're clinically extremely vulnerable, or been contacted by your GP or hospital clinician. Shielding is a measure to protect people who are clinically extremely vulnerable by minimising all interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others.

### **Local Help with Food for People who are Shielding**

Ask family, friends and neighbours to support you and use online services. If this is not possible, then the public sector, business, charities and the general public are gearing up to help those advised to stay at home.

Please visit [gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable) to register for the support that you need. This includes help with food, shopping deliveries and additional care you might need.

Some supermarkets are prioritising delivery for extremely vulnerable customers on the register.

Many local meal delivery services are continuing to take on new customers and deliver meals. Availability may vary during the covid-19 outbreak. A local list is available from <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/uploads/dis-information-sheet-meal-delivery-services-p14.pdf>

### **Exercise**

**It is important to stay active even if you are self isolating/shielding at home to maintain your muscle mass and strength. A combination of good nutrition and activity is the most effective way to maintain your strength.**

Adults should do some type of physical activity every day, even if it is just light activity. Do activities that improve strength, balance and flexibility on at least 2 days a week. Reduce time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity.

If you've fallen, or are worried about falling, doing exercises to improve your strength, balance and flexibility will help make you stronger and feel more confident on your feet. Speak to your GP if you have any concerns about exercising.

Examples of light activity include getting up to make a cup of tea, moving around your home, walking at a slow pace, cleaning, making the bed, gardening, online exercise, fitness and online yoga groups

## Strength & Resistance

Strength activities make your muscles stronger making everyday activities easier. Some of these can be done while seated.

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-matters-magazine/activity/strength-exercises>  
<https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-matters-magazine/activity/strength-exercises-using-everyday-objects>

Tai Chi comprises a series of postures linked by slow, graceful movements and accompanied by breathing techniques that focus the concentration. Benefits include improved balance, relaxation and increased energy levels. It can also help to reduce pain.

<https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/pain-service/reconnect2life/improving-health-and-fitness/tai-chi/>

## Online Resources

The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics will be regularly updating list of reliable nutrition resources which can be found on this link. Including links to community support groups. <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/nutrition-dietetics/>

For general advice about COVID-19 and nutrition

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/covid-19-corona-virus-advice-for-the-general-public.html>

For a brief guide for older adults to keep well when social distancing (Helping Older Adults Cope Well - Covid 19) <https://www.bda.uk.com/uploads/assets/b840a77c-df5a-494d-9ef5651651f763e8/Helping-Older-Adults-Keep-Well-download.png>

For information on store cupboard ideas to support older adults in the community <file:///O:/Community/COVID/BDA%20store%20cupboard%20items%20leaflet.pdf>

Video for making fortified milk

<https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/nutrition-dietetics/support-videos/patients/using-fortified-milk/>

Nutrition fact sheets available on a range of topics available on the British Dietetic Association website. [www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts)

Torbay Food Alliance

<https://www.torbayfoodalliance.org/>

If you or someone you care for is concerned about unintentional weight loss, please contact your GP or other Healthcare professional for further advice.

Leaflet Given Out By.....

Contact Number.....

Date.....

Leaflet produced by The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Torbay Hospital.

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.