



Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

FACT SHEET

HEALTHY EATING DURING A PANDEMIC



Why is healthy eating during a pandemic important?

Healthy eating will keep you well-nourished during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, it is important to have enough food if you are required to stay home and self-isolate for 14 days. There are some basic food staples you can stock to keep your family well. Try the tips below to purchase wisely and be prepared:

1. Plan meals:

[Canada's food guide](#) advises us to eat a variety of healthy foods every day.

- Make half your plate vegetables and fruit.
- Choose whole grain foods.
- Include protein foods, emphasizing those that come from plants more often.
- Make water your drink of choice. For children, include a glass of milk at meals.



Think about what you will serve for breakfast, lunch and dinner each day. What do you need, and how much for each person? Do you need any special diet foods? Your meals will likely be simpler, prepared from pantry staples and perishable foods with a longer shelf-life. Make a meal plan listing the food items that you would serve at each meal, including snacks. Consider making a few items to freeze such as chili, spaghetti sauce or soup for easy meals.

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2. Minimize trips to the grocery store:

Reduce the number of trips, so stores will be less crowded. This can decrease the risk for COVID-19 for everyone, including staff.

Make a shopping list based on your menu plan. Go through your pantry, freezer and fridge to see what items you already have on hand. Gradually buy the items you need to have a two-week supply of food.

Only buy what you need. Don't hoard food. It is important to be reasonable and leave adequate food for more vulnerable community members, including older adults, those with limited access to transportation and those who do not have the money or storage space to stock up. Think about friends and neighbours, especially older adults or those with health conditions. Could you pick up a few items to save them a trip?

3. Buy nutritious foods based on Canada's food guide:

Vegetables and Fruit

- Fresh vegetables that last longer: beets, carrots, parsnips, rutabaga, turnip, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, cabbage, squash, onions, garlic, ginger
- Frozen and canned vegetables: peas, corn, tomatoes, and tomato or pasta sauces
- Fresh fruits that last longer: apples, melon, oranges, grapefruit, avocado
- Frozen fruit packed without sugar, fruit canned in water, unsweetened applesauce blends, dried fruit

Whole Grains

- Cold and hot cereals, pasta, rice, breads/bagels (with a longer shelf life), English muffins, couscous, quinoa, crackers, frozen whole grain waffles or pizza crust

- Words such as whole grain whole wheat, whole rye, whole spelt, whole grain oats and flaxseed indicate whole grains. Look for 'whole grain' as the first ingredient in the list.
- Enriched wheat flour, enriched flour, wheat flour, unbleached wheat flour and untreated wheat flour are refined grains, without the bran and germ layers.

Protein Foods

- Nuts and nut butters such as peanut, almond, cashew
- Seeds such as sunflower
- Canned and dried beans (black, navy, kidney, bean mixes); brown, green or red lentils; peas such as chick peas or split peas; beans in tomato sauce, pea or lentil soups
- Hummus
- Frozen ready-to-cook fish fillets, canned tuna, salmon, and sardines
- Meat to freeze
- Eggs
- Yogurt, cottage cheese, hard cheese, fresh or non-refrigerated milk, milk powder, evaporated milk
- Fortified plant-based beverages

Other Longer Shelf-Life Items

- Coffee, tea
- Flavourings such as dried herbs and spices, vinegars
- Canned soups, broths and stocks
- Oils, salad dressings and condiments

4. Be mindful of your eating habits

Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat.

- Stay tuned to your body's hunger and fullness cues. It is easy to eat for reasons other than hunger such as feeling stressed or anxious. Make food choices that support your health, taste good and make you feel good. You don't have to eat "perfectly" to be healthy. Healthy eating is an overall pattern over time; no one food or meal defines our habits.
- Set a regular schedule for meals and snacks to keep everyone from grazing all day. Reduce boredom by involving kids in meal preparation. They can chop vegetables, grate the cheese, set the table, and pour the water.
- Make a new recipe together. Find a simple recipe with only a few ingredients.
- Sit down at the table together to enjoy a family meal. Use this time to reconnect and plan the next day's schedule. Brainstorm physical activities you can do to reduce screen time, such as a backyard scavenger hunt, skipping, and dog walking.



For more information on COVID-19, nutrition and healthy eating visit:

- www.dietitians.ca
- www.unlockfood.ca
- www.food-guide.canada.ca

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