

Food, Nutrition, and COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people with an increased risk for complications—including older aged people, people who are immunocompromised (weakened immune systems), and people who are on immunosuppressive medication—take extra steps to protect their health right now. This handout answers common questions and explains extra steps you can take when preparing, cooking and shopping for food.



Common questions

Can I get COVID-19 from food and water?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can be spread through food or water systems. However, you should **avoid sharing food and drinks**.

What can I do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- **Wash your hands**

The best thing you can do is wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, often. Examples of when to wash your hands include:

- Before preparing or eating food
- After being out in public
- After touching your face
- After coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose
- After using the bathroom

If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60-percent alcohol.

- **Practice food safety**

- Clean and disinfect countertops and other surfaces
- Wash hands, surfaces and fresh produce
- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from ready-to-eat foods
- Cook to proper temperatures using a food thermometer
- Refrigerate leftovers within two hours

How do I protect myself when I go to the grocery store?

- Go to the store less often to avoid contact with other people. Many grocery stores are offering special hours for high-risk shoppers only. Check to see if your store has these.
- Use sanitizing wipes to clean your shopping cart or basket.
- Avoid self-checkout stations used by lots of other customers. Go to a cashier when possible to limit exposure to surfaces.
- Wash/sanitize reusable shopping bags between trips.
- If you are unable to get the items you need, consider asking family or friends for help. They can drop off groceries at your door. Meal and grocery delivery services can be another option.

What type of foods should I buy?

Here are some ideas of what to buy at the grocery store:

- Protein
 - Keep your freezer full of lean meats such as chicken, turkey, and fish. Thaw only what you will use every few days.
 - Keep canned meats on hand such as tuna and chicken.
 - Dried or canned beans, lentils and peas are wonderful staple foods. They contain plant-based protein and have a long shelf life.
 - Nuts or nut butters such as almonds, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, and Brazil nuts can be added to recipes or eaten as snacks for a protein boost.
- Fruits and vegetables
 - Frozen or canned produce are inexpensive, nutritious, and convenient options. Fruits and veggies are flash frozen or canned at the height of their nutritional quality. Blend fruits into smoothies, steam veggies for dinner, or cook veggies into soups.
 - Consider dried fruit such as apricots, raisins and prunes.
 - Use fresh fruits/vegetables first to avoid spoilage.
- Whole grains
 - Whole grains like whole-wheat bread, pasta, quinoa and brown rice have more vitamins, minerals and fiber than processed grains. Brown rice can be cooked into soups, made into stir-fry, or served with beans.
 - Use whole-wheat flour as a substitute in many recipes.
 - Choose whole grain cereal and instant oatmeal for quick and easy breakfast options.
 - Bread products can be frozen for 3-6 months to extend shelf life.
 - Consider whole grain granola bars and crackers, which have a long shelf-life.
- Dairy
 - Consider shelf-stable milk available in cow's milk and alternatives such as soy, almond or coconut milk.
 - Refrigerated milks, cheese and yogurt are excellent protein sources, but be sure to consume before the expiration date.
 - Eggs can be kept for 3-5 weeks in the refrigerator.

- Frozen or canned meals
 - Stock up on healthy frozen entrees for options when you may not have the energy to cook.
 - Keep canned soups on hand for a quick and easy meal option.
- Condiments/extras
 - Olive, canola or other vegetable oils
 - Mayonnaise, mustard, ketchup and relish
 - Salt, pepper and other spices
 - Sugar and flour for baking
 - Chicken, beef or vegetable stock/broths
 - Jelly, jam and/or honey

When thinking about what to make at home, consider foods that also freeze well. Casseroles, soups, muffins and breads are easy to portion out and store in the freezer in individual containers. These foods can be frozen for 2-3 months without significant loss to quality.

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [ready.gov/food](https://www.ready.gov/food), [eatright.org/coronavirus](https://www.eatright.org/coronavirus), [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

This education resource was intended to be given as a part of a nutrition consult by an SCCA dietitian.
Questions? Ask an SCCA dietitian at nutrition@seattlecca.org.