

Nutrition for Cold & Flu Recovery

These tips are for people who have a cold or flu or are recovering from one. When you're sick, getting enough food and fluids can help you:

- maintain strength
- fight infection
- heal and recover

The tips in this handout can help you get the nutrition you need to feel better.

This information is not for when you have a stomach bug (vomiting, diarrhea), however some of the tips may help.



If you have vomiting or diarrhea lasting longer than 24–48 hours, contact your healthcare provider.

Drink enough fluids

Sip fluids throughout the day, even if you are not thirsty.

Age (years)	Recommended amount of fluid to drink daily
18–64	9–12 cups (2.2–3 L)
65+	6–8 cups (1.5–2 L)

Choose drinks that you enjoy. Fluid includes milk, fortified soy beverage, nutrition supplement drinks, soup, smoothies, broth, water, pop, coffee, and tea.

- Take small sips every few minutes if you don't feel able to drink too much.
- Keep fluids at your bedside so you can sip them when you are awake.

Drinking enough fluids daily can help prevent dehydration. Dehydration is when your body doesn't get enough fluid. If you have a fever, you are at a higher risk for dehydration.

Watch for these signs of dehydration

- dry mouth
- feeling dizzy or weak
- low blood pressure
- muscle cramping
- peeing less or have dark pee
- weight loss

Older adults

Signs of dehydration may be different in older adults. It may be helpful to track the amount of fluid you are drinking. This can help you see if you are getting enough.



Monitor your symptoms. If they do not improve or if you cannot drink the recommended amount of fluid a day, contact your healthcare team.

Make every bite and sip count

Even a small increase in calories and protein can help you feel better.

- Try to eat every 2–3 hours, even if you don't feel hungry.
- Eat foods higher in protein first like, eggs, fish, poultry, meat, wild meat, milk, and cheese, tofu, fortified soy beverage, beans, nuts, and seeds.
- Drink fluids between or at the end of meals. This leaves more room in your stomach for food.
- Try liquid foods like smoothies or soups.
- Freeze smoothies into ice pop moulds to have between meals.

Nutrition and protein supplements

Nutrition and protein supplements are food and drinks that have extra nutrition. If you are having a hard time eating enough food, nutrition and protein supplements may help. They give you extra calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals.

Nutrition and protein supplements come in drinks, bars, puddings, and powders. Try different brands, flavours, and product types to find one you like.

Store-brand products tend to cost less and have the same nutrition.

- Mix in with drinks like milk, fortified plant-based beverage, or juice.

- Blend nutrition supplement drinks or protein powder with frozen fruit, ice cream, or yogurt for a smoothie or milkshake.
- Stir into moist foods like yogurt, oatmeal, or soup.

Learn more, visit

ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts and search “getting more calories and protein”.

Medications and supplements

- If you take prescription medications, check if you need to take them with food. If so, try to eat something when you take your medicine.
- Research shows that a vitamin C and zinc supplement can shorten the duration of a cold. Check with the pharmacist to ensure it is safe for you to do so and how much to take.

Save your energy

- Ask for help with meals or use grocery delivery services, meal services, or meal preparation boxes if available.
- Buy pre-made foods like a deli rotisserie chicken, canned soup, or frozen meals.

For more support



Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a self-referral form on ahs.ca/811.

