

COVID-19: Nutrition for Recovery

COVID-19 is an infection. Having COVID-19 can:

- affect your appetite
- make you feel nauseous
- make you lose your sense of smell and taste
- make it hard to swallow

COVID-19 can affect what and how much you can eat. Having a healthy diet helps to keep your immune system working at its best. Your body needs more calories and protein during an infection.

If you were admitted to hospital with COVID-19, it can be a long road to recovery.

Nutrition is a very important part of recovery from COVID-19.

See the ideas below to help you to get the nutrition you need.

Maintain your weight if possible

Some people with COVID-19 lose weight and muscle which can make it harder to get well and be able to do your routine activities.

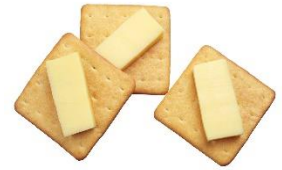
Eat more calories and protein

Even a small increase in calories and protein can help you to maintain or gain weight and strength. Try to eat every 2-3 hours. Include a food with protein when you eat.

- Add extra beef, chicken, or tuna to casseroles, stew, vegetable dishes, soups, spaghetti sauces, and salads.
- Choose higher fat milk like 3.25% (homogenized) milk.
- Choose Greek or Icelandic yogurt instead of regular yogurt.
- Choose higher fat cheeses (at least 28% M.F.).

- Add skim milk powder or protein powder to smoothies.

- Add cheese to eggs, salads, casseroles, or sandwiches.



- Add beans, peas, or lentils to stir-fries, casseroles, salads or soups.

- Choose sweet tofu or cottage cheese for a snack.

- Choose boiled eggs at breakfast or as a snack.



- Add peanut butter to crackers or toast.

- Choose nuts or trail mix for a snack.

- Add fats and oils to your foods like vegetable oils, butter, whipping cream, margarine, cream cheese, and sour cream.

Nutrition supplements

If you cannot maintain your weight by eating food; you may need a nutrition supplement drink or pudding. They can add calories, protein and vitamins and minerals when you cannot meet your needs with food.

Have these supplement drinks as a snack or at the end of a meal so they don't decrease the amount of food you eat at meals. Or take small amounts (¼ cup or 60 mL) 3-5 times per day. Take after each meal or with medications/between meals.

Examples include:

- Boost[®], Boost Plus[®], Boost[®] Pudding
- Ensure[®], Ensure Protein Max[®], Ensure Plus Calories[®], Ensure Compact[®], Ensure High Protein[®]
- Resource[®] 2.0

Other brands from your grocery store or pharmacy are just as nutritious and may cost less than brand names.

Drink enough fluid

- Continue to drink even if you are not thirsty.
- Examples include water, milk, fruit juice, nutrition supplement drinks, broth, sports drinks, coffee and tea. Check with your doctor if alcohol is permitted.
- Drink ¼–½ cup (60–125 mL) every 15 minutes.
 - Take sips every few minutes if you cannot drink all at once.
 - Keep liquids at your bedside so you can sip them if you wake at night.
- Check your urine to see that you are passing light yellow urine every 3–4 hours.
- If you have vomiting or diarrhea lasting longer than 24–48 hours, contact your doctor.

Find more ways to improve your food intake

Visit [healthyeatingstartshere.ca](https://www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca) and search:

- Adding Calories and Protein to Your Diet
- High Protein High Calorie Meal and Snack Ideas
- Making Smoothies with More Calories and Protein
- Nutrition Supplements
- Eating Well When Your Taste and Smell Changes
- Tips to Eat and Swallow Safely

Other resources

- Health Link has dietitians available to answer general nutrition questions. If you have a nutrition question, call 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a dietitian.
- If you have trouble eating or if you have lost weight, ask your health provider for a referral to a dietitian.

- **211 Alberta** is a free, confidential service that provides information and referral to a wide range of community services. It includes a list of information about food services in the community like food hampers, free/low cost meals, and school meal programs.
Call, text, or phone 211 Alberta:
 - dial 2-1-1
 - text INFO to 211 or
 - visit www.ab.211.ca and click “live chat.”
- For information about where to find free food in Alberta visit [healthyeatingstartshere.ca](https://www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca) and search *Free Food in Alberta*.
- For information about **Food Safety** visit [Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca) and search *COVID-19 and Food Safety*.
- Rehabilitation Advice Line: Call toll-free at 1-833-379-0563 for advice on activities and exercises to help you get back to your normal routine.
- For updated COVID-19 information, testing, and other resources, visit [ahs.ca/covid](https://www.ahs.ca/covid).