

Eating and drinking when recovering from COVID-19

To aid your recovery from COVID-19 and support you to get back to everyday life sooner, our dietetic team has put together this guide on eating and drinking when recovering from COVID-19.

What makes food and drink important?

When our body is fighting an infection it needs more energy and more fluids; therefore we need to eat and drink more than we usually would if we were well. Our body also needs more building blocks (from protein foods) to support our immune system and help repair our body tissues during recovery. Vitamins and minerals help these processes along.

When we are unwell it is difficult to eat and drink for many reasons. If we do not eat and drink enough our body may need to use its natural stores of energy, protein, minerals and vitamins; you may notice some weight loss or your muscles getting smaller and weaker. We hope the tips in this leaflet help to limit these changes in your body.

Where can you learn more about nutrition?

- BDA Coronavirus: www.bda.uk.com/resource/covid-19-coronavirus-advice-for-the-general-public.html
- BDA food fact sheets: www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html
- Diabetes UK: www.diabetes.org.uk

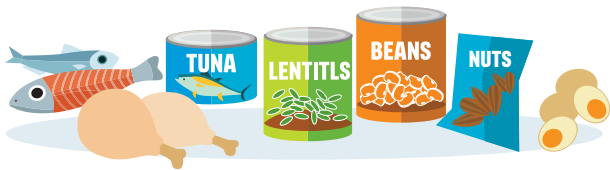
What can you do to make the most of your food and drink in hospital?

1. **Choosing from the menu** - select the higher protein / higher energy options and ask for extra desserts or snacks (e.g. yoghurt, custard, rice pudding or cheese) to give your body the extra energy and extra protein it needs. Aim to have three portions of protein daily.
2. **Supplement drinks** - these can be useful if you are eating less than usual due to poor appetite, breathing difficulties or fatigue; also if you have lost weight or muscle mass. You can ask your nurse or doctor to refer you to the ward dietitian who can advise on the most suitable supplement drinks; most of which are lactose free and Kosher approved.
3. **Drinking more fluid** - set yourself a target to drink two jugs of water each day; remember soups, supplement drinks, milk, juice and moist foods all give you fluids too. Try drinking at the end of the meal - drinking before or during a meal may cause you to feel too full.
4. **Try eating little and often** - for example, choose smaller meals (marked S on the menu) plus snacks rather than three larger meals. Eat slowly, take smaller bites, and breathe deeply while chewing. Eat while sitting up and choose foods that are easier to chew or softer to make it easier to breathe.
5. **Coping with nausea or changes in taste/smell** - regularly clean your teeth/dentures or ask nursing staff for mouth wash or mouth care. Try sharp, spicy or sugary foods if you experience taste changes as they have a stronger taste. For nausea, plainer foods may be better tolerated. Ask ward staff for sauces or extra salt/pepper to add more taste to meals. For a dry mouth try sucking on fruit sweets, ice lollies, mints or chewing gum as these can stimulate saliva production.

What can you do to make the most of your food and drink once you are home?

To rebuild your strength choose high protein foods and gradually increase your activity levels back to what is normal for you.

Aim to have **3** hand size items from this **Protein** group daily



Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins. Eat more beans and pulses, less red and processed meat.

Aim to have **3** thumb size items from this **Dairy*** group daily



*If you want to gain weight choose the full fat and full sugar versions.

Aim to have **5*** handfuls of **fruit and vegetable** from this group each day



Getting enough vitamin and minerals:

Eat with the rainbow; different colours provide different **vitamins and minerals**.

***If this is difficult you may want to buy a daily complete A-Z multivitamin and mineral supplement; your pharmacist can help you choose one.**

Nourishing drinks can be really helpful if you aren't feeling up to eating:

1. 1 pint blue top / soya milk + 4 tablespoons skimmed milk/ soya, pea, hemp powder + frozen fruit / chocolate powder/ milk flavouring
2. 300ml blue top / soya milk + 2 tablespoons oats + 1 tablespoon nut butter + 1 banana
3. Over the counter oral nutritional supplements and nourishing drinks (e.g. nourishment drink, Complan or Meritene soup and/or milkshakes).

Ideas for keeping active:

Just 10 minutes of any activity where you are moving your body will benefit your health & wellbeing; visit the following links for free guided videos www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/

There are services to help if you can't get to the shops:

- For groceries, pick up and deliveries, telephone befriending and welfare advice, complete the online form www.hackney.gov.uk/coronavirus-support or call Hackney Council helpline 020 8356 3111. For clients that need to shield: www.hackney.gov.uk/coronavirus-support#vulnerable Your healthcare professional can refer you to Hackney Foodbanks upon request.

More support and advice is available:

- In Hospital: Ask your nurse to refer you to the ward Dietitian
- At Home: Ask your GP to refer you to the Community Dietitian