

Why is it important to eat well to support my recovery?

Many people lose their appetite and eat less when feeling unwell with, and recovering from, COVID. It is normal to feel tired after being unwell, and recovery can take time. You may find that you have difficulties with shopping, preparing food and eating your usual size of meals. This may be because you feel tired or weak. Because of COVID, you may have changes in your sense of smell and/or taste, shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing, dry mouth, nausea and constipation. This can make it difficult to get the right nutrition you need to help you do your day-to-day activities and could make your recovery longer.



This information is for general information only. It does not replace the advice from a doctor or a registered dietitian.

Eating well is important as your body needs energy, protein, vitamins and minerals to help you recover. Having a good intake of protein and energy-rich foods supports you with rebuilding muscles, maintaining your immune system, and increasing your energy levels to allow you to do your usual activities. Your body needs more calories and protein during infection.

Minimizing weight loss and regaining muscle strength is important for your recovery. It is important to track your weight and lookout for signs of weight loss, such as your clothing becoming loose. Keeping a diary of the food that you eat for 3-7 days can be helpful to check how much you are able to eat, and look for patterns or times in the day where you are most hungry and can tolerate food. Eat your biggest meal when your appetite is best. This may be at breakfast time rather than at the traditional evening meal.



How do I maintain my weight and regain my strength?

- Eat more calories and protein.
- Try and eat little and often. This may include three small healthy meals plus nourishing snacks/drinks in between until your appetite picks up.
- Choose protein-rich foods (e.g. meat, fish, eggs, cheese, beans, nuts, seeds and lentils), and energy-rich foods (e.g. avocados, yogurt, whole grains, smoothies, fruit and vegetables with spreads).
- Keep well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. Milk-based drinks or milk options (e.g. soy, oat, almond milk) can provide additional nutrients like protein. Take your fluids between your meals instead of alongside, so you do not take up too much room in your stomach when eating solid food.
- If you are struggling to eat because of taste and smell changes, please visit our handout on this topic for ideas to improve the taste of food.
www.phsa.ca/health-info-site/Documents/post_covid-19_Taste_and_Smell_Changes.pdf
- If you are prescribed oral nutrition supplements (e.g. Boost or Ensure drinks), take these between meals so they don't affect your appetite at mealtimes.
- If you are struggling with swallowing, speak to a health-care professional – thickened supplements may be safer for you to take.



Some ideas for adding extra energy and protein into food are:

- Add extra beef, chicken, or tuna to casseroles or stews, vegetable dishes, soups, sauces or salads.
- Choose higher fat milk or milk options.
- Choose Greek or Icelandic yogurt (full fat) instead of regular yogurt.
- Choose higher fat cheeses (at least 28% milkfat).
- Add protein powder or skim milk powder to smoothies.
- Add cheese to eggs, salads, casseroles, or sandwiches.
- Add beans, peas, or lentils to stir-fries, casseroles, salads, or soups.
- Choose tofu or cottage cheese as a snack
- Choose boiled eggs at breakfast or as a snack
- Add peanut or almond butter to crackers, toast, or curries.
- Choose nuts or trail mix for a snack.
- Add healthy fats and oils to your foods like olive oil, avocado oil, butter, whipping cream, cream cheese, and sour cream.
- Add high fat/protein spreads to snacks (e.g. hummus, guacamole, cream cheese).

Speak to your family doctor if you have concerns regarding unintentional weight loss or muscle weakness.

Should I be taking any vitamin or mineral supplements?

If you are only eating small amounts or are unable to eat all the recommended food groups then you may wish to consider taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement. A single daily multivitamin is usually safe; however, some vitamins and minerals are dangerous if taken as a single nutrient supplement or if taken in large amounts. If you take too much, you

may experience unpleasant side effects. Speak to your health-care professional or registered dietitian if you have any concerns or questions before taking any supplements.

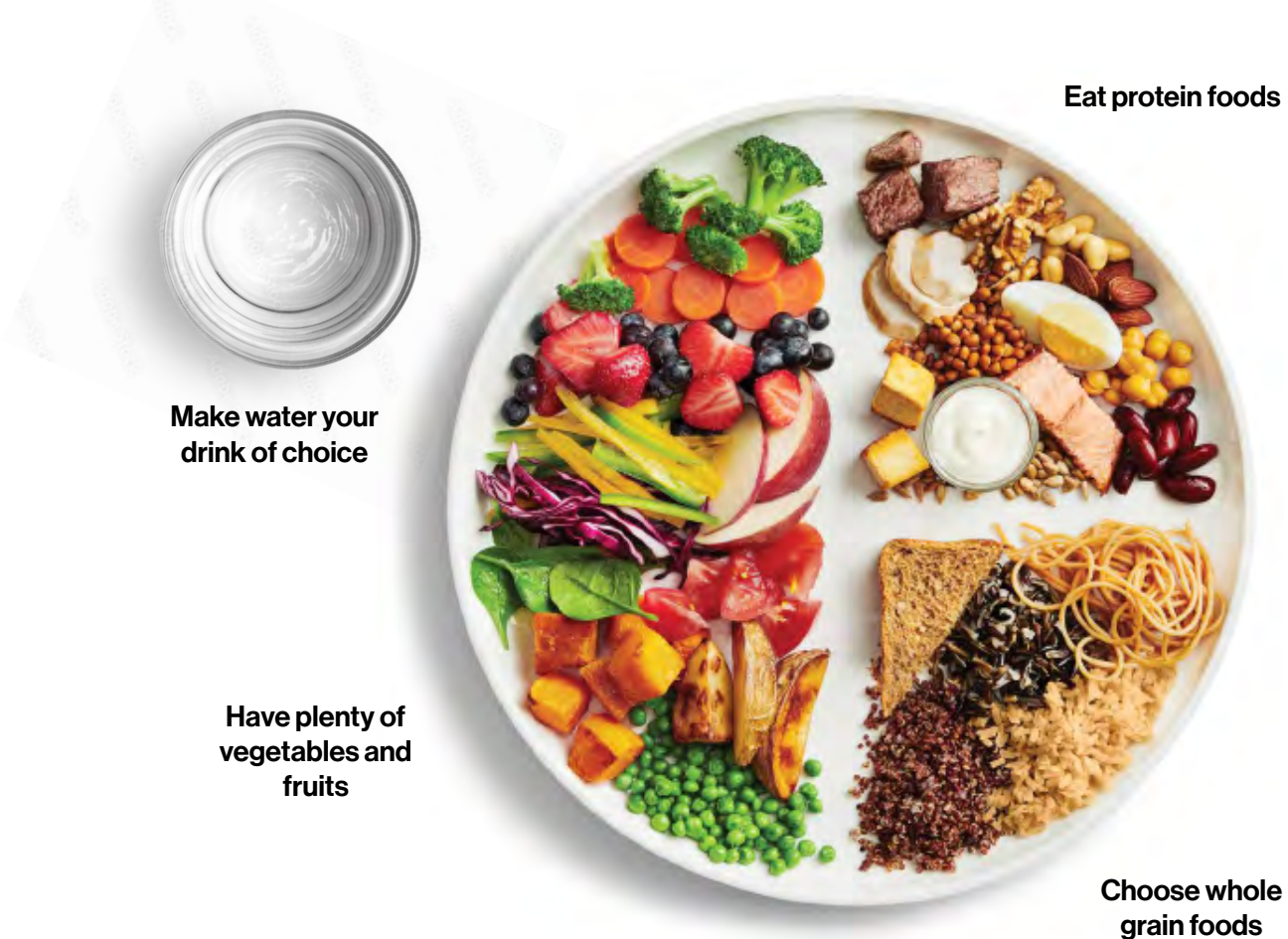


In general, what should I eat to support my health?

Eating a variety of healthy foods every day will help you recover and regain strength. As per Canada's Food Guide key recommendations are:

- Have plenty of vegetables and fruits
- Eat protein-rich foods
- Make water your drink of choice
- Choose whole-grain foods.

For more information please visit – www.food-guide.canada.ca/en/



I want to find out more about my nutrition and recovery, how do I contact a registered dietitian?

For information and advice related to healthy eating and nutrition, call 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for the hearing impaired) to speak with a registered dietitian. Translation services are available in over 130 languages.

- [Email a HealthLinkBC Dietitian](#) your questions about food and nutrition.
- Visit HealthLink BC's [Healthy Eating](#) page to learn about making healthy eating and lifestyle choices.



Additional Resources on Nutrition for Post COVID-19 Recovery

- www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/your-wellbeing/eating-well
- www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/food-and-nutrition
- www.family-medicine.ca/images/Tips-for-Nutrition-and-Hydration-while-recovering-from-COVID19-ANF-edits.pdf
- www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-nutrition-for-recovery.pdf
- www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/nutrition/nutrition-handouts
- Some recipes and ideas to increase energy and calories into your daily meals can be found here: www.bccancer.bc.ca/nutrition-site/Documents/Patient%20Education/high_protein_high_energy_food_choices.pdf

For more information on how to support your understanding and management of symptoms as you recover from COVID-19, please visit www.phsa.ca/health-info/post-covid-19-care-recovery

