

Top Five Questions about Food and Eating During COVID-19

Many of our routines and structures have been turned upside down. The one thing that continues to be essential is that we still need to eat! Without stockpiling food, how can we decrease stress around eating?

[Is it OK to eat comfort foods right now?](#)

[Can COVID-19 be transmitted by eating and preparing food?](#)

[How can I reduce trips to the grocery store?](#)

[What foods to keep in my cupboard and fridge?](#)

[How do I shop for two weeks of food?](#)



Is it OK to eat comfort foods right now?

Eating more than usual, or more of certain foods than usual, can be a part of helping us cope during stressful times. Despite what we may hear on social media, it's OK to eat food for reasons other than hunger and nutrition. [Eating because it feels good](#) is a part of healthy eating. Let's give ourselves permission to eat, and [not shame about eating and our bodies during this COVID-induced time of anxiety.](#)

Now is a great time to create a routine of meals and snacks that meets your needs. Feed yourself consistently in amounts that you want. Include the foods that you have the ingredients for, that you know how to prepare, and, if possible, that you enjoy. Explore the taste and textures of food and get curious about how it makes you feel. At the same time, consider other ways to [cope with stress during COVID.](#) In this way, we can help nurture a healthy relationship with food, and in the long run build healthier eating habits. During these unprecedented times, let's go gentle on ourselves, take the pressure off, and trust that our body will respond the way it needs to right now.

Can COVID-19 be transmitted by eating and preparing food?

COVID-19 does not appear to be spread through food. When preparing food, follow standard food safety practices, including [hand-hygiene](#) and washing fruit and vegetables with water. Find the answers to more [questions about food safety and COVID-19.](#)

How can I reduce trips to the grocery store?

Minimize trips to the grocery store and reduce waste by [making plans](#) around what to prepare for the week. Consider meals that are versatile and make enough for [leftovers](#). Soups, stews and casseroles are great to freeze as leftovers for the following week. Batch cook ingredients and use them over a few days, such as pre-cooking dried lentils or roasting a whole chicken. Stir-fry dishes are a great way to use up leftover produce. Make sure you [store perishables](#) to help them last as long as possible. Most of all, when possible, include foods that you enjoy eating.

We can still go out to purchase food within a safe distance from others if we are showing no [symptoms](#) and have not returned from recent travel or been in contact with someone who has travelled recently. Check out this video on [grocery store etiquette.](#)

What foods to keep in my cupboard and fridge?

Sort through non-perishables in your cupboards, fridge and freezer to figure out what you have. Check best before dates. Best-before dates refer to quality, not safety; they tell you how long a product will maintain its peak freshness. Eggs, milk and yogurt can be eaten safely soon after their best-before dates if they've been stored properly. Make a list of what you need for meals and snacks. Have some non-perishable items on-hand that you can make simple meals from and [keep costs down](#).



Non-perishables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain products: dried pasta, noodles, rice, couscous, barley, oatmeal, rolled oats, ready-to-eat cereal • Canned goods: vegetables and fruit (e.g. canned tomatoes, tomato paste, applesauce), fish (e.g. tuna, sardines, salmon), canned or dried legumes (e.g. lentils, chickpeas, black beans), broth or bouillon • Baking products: Flour, baking powder, baking soda, sugar, salt • Peanut butter or nut/seed butter, condiments, vegetable oil, vinegars, dried herbs & spices • Favourite snack foods (e.g. crackers, popcorn, chocolate)

Basic perishables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh and frozen vegetables (e.g. carrots, apples, frozen peas, frozen green beans) • Meat, chicken, fish • Bread, roti, tortillas- can be frozen to keep fresh • Tofu, eggs, yogurt, cheese, milk, and plant-based drinks

How do I shop for two weeks of food?

In these times, it can help to keep food supplies on-hand that will last for two weeks especially if you have [symptoms](#) and it is not safe for you to shop. Consider some of the above basic non-perishable items that are missing from your pantry to help extend your supplies. The following list provides some ideas based on shelf-life. Choose the foods and amounts that fit the needs of your household.

One week shelf life	Two weeks (or longer) shelf life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh leafy greens (e.g. kale, spinach, lettuce) • Berries, bananas, pears • Fresh meat, fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tofu, eggs, yogurt, cheese, milk and/or plant-based drinks can be stored longer in the fridge if left unopened • potatoes, carrots, cabbage, yams, winter squash, beets, onions • Apples, oranges, dried fruit, nuts, seeds

Go easy on yourself. We're all doing the best we can in these uncertain times. What works for one person may be different for someone else. During this time of social distancing, we wish everyone health and pleasure with eating today and in the long run.

Additional Resources

How to access lower cost and free food

Check out the [VCH food asset map](#) webpage for updates. If you're looking for updated information in your neighbourhood, check with individual organizations for current services and hours of operation.

Helping others

If you have no [symptoms](#), you can grocery shop for friends and neighbours who may not be able to leave their home. Learn about more ways to help at [the United Way](#) or [BetteratHome.ca](#).

COVID-19 Mental Health Resources:

- [BC government stress management tips](#)
- [BCPA psychological support for stress and anxiety during COVID-19](#)
- [Mental Health COVID-19 First Aid Self-Care & Resilience Guide](#)

For specific nutrition questions contact HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 to speak to a registered dietitian or [email a HealthLinkBC dietitian](#)