

## Research Article

# Food And Nutrition- Is It Really Important During Covid Times?

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**Abstract:** Nutrition is modifiable factor highly associated with COVID-19 severe illness and deaths. So many people falling ill due to corona virus unhealthy food habits contributes to preexisting health conditions. Diets are crucial to the health status of people around the world. People with pre-existing, diet-related conditions such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, are suffering more serious consequences from COVID-19, including more severe illness and a greater need for intensive health care, such as respirators. Malnutrition also severely weakens people's immune systems, increasing people's chances of getting ill, staying ill, and dying because of illness. One should follow safe food handling practices.

**Keywords:** Nutrition, Malnutrition, immune system.

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## INTRODUCTION

With so many people falling ill from the coronavirus (COVID-19), unhealthy diets are contributing to pre-existing conditions that put them more at risk. Nutrition is not a cure for COVID-19, but it is a modifiable contributor to the development of chronic disease, which is highly associated with COVID-19 severe illness and deaths. So many people falling ill due to corona virus unhealthy food habits contributes to preexisting health conditions. Diets are crucial to the health status of people around the world. Emerging evidence suggests that people with pre-existing, diet-related conditions such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, are suffering more serious consequences from COVID-19, including more severe illness and a greater need for intensive health care, such as respirators. Malnutrition also severely weakens people's immune systems, increasing people's chances of getting ill, staying ill, and dying because of illness. Iron, iodine, folate, vitamin A, and zinc deficiencies are the most wide. This "hidden hunger" not only increases the risk of morbidity and mortality, but also contributes to poor growth, intellectual impairment, and perinatal complications. This lowers countries' human capital and development prospects.

## Food and Nutrition Insecurity to Rise During Covid-19

Inequity on food and nutrition is about to get much worse. Food insecurity is more in low- and middle-income countries this year due to income and remittance losses. COVID-19 puts diet at risk due to disrupted health and nutrition services, job, income loss, disruption of local food supply chain, infection vulnerability among poor people. Same time, there is evidence that the sale of non-perishable foods is growing rapidly in the crisis, at the expense of fresh foods, such as vegetables and fruits, and high protein foods, such as legumes, fish and meat.

## IMPORTANCE OF GOOD NUTRITION

Good nutrition is crucial for health, particularly in times when the immune system might need to fight back. A well-balanced diet strengthens the immune system and reduces the risk of chronic disease and infectious diseases. Slowing down their recovery. Those with an infection are also at higher risk of developing malnutrition which slows their recovery. Malnutrition is also more common for older people and those who are already socially isolated. Social distancing and social isolation could impact a person's access to the wide variety of foods

needed to keep healthy and may make them want to eat less.

Malnutrition can also increase the risk of frailty, which is also more common in older age. Frailty can lead to weaker muscles and make people more vulnerable to infections, falls and needing extra care.

Limited access to fresh foods may compromise opportunities to continue eating a healthy and varied diet. It can also potentially lead to an increased consumption of highly processed foods, which tend to be high in fats, sugars and salt. Nonetheless, even with few and limited ingredients, one can continue eating a diet that supports good health. On the health side, stepping up nutrition advice (delivered, for example, by mobile phone twinned with cash transfers, or through community workers), promoting breast-feeding, and fighting misinformation around COVID-19 transmission will help preserve the role of nutritious food as an ally against illness, even in hard times.

### **Food and Nutrition Habits to be adopted**

#### **Prepare home-cooked meals**

During regular daily life, many individuals often do not have the time to prepare home-cooked meals. Spending longer periods of time at home may now offer the possibility to make those recipes

Follow safe food handling practices

Only safe food is healthy food. When preparing food for yourself and others, it is important to follow good food hygiene practices to avoid food contamination and foodborne diseases. The key principles of good food hygiene include:

- Keep your hands, kitchen and utensils clean
- Separate raw and cooked food, especially raw meat and fresh produce
- Cook your food thoroughly
- Keep your food at safe temperatures, either below 5 °C or above 60 °C; and
- Use safe water and raw material.

By following these five key recommendations for safer food, you can prevent many common foodborne diseases.

#### **Limit your salt intake**

The availability of fresh foods may decrease and it may therefore become necessary to rely more on canned, frozen or processed foods. Many of these foods contain high levels of salt. WHO recommends consuming less than 5 g of salt per day. In order to achieve this, prioritize foods with reduced or no added salt. You may also consider rinsing canned foods such as vegetables and beans, to remove some of the excess sodium. Be aware that pickled foods often contain high levels of sodium too. In many countries, 50–75% of the salt intake comes from the foods we eat, rather than what we add ourselves. Given that you might be consuming enough salt already, avoid adding extra salt when cooking and to your meals at the table.

Experiment with fresh or dried herbs and spices for added flavour instead.

#### **Limit your sugar intake**

Ideally less than 5% of total energy intake for adults should come from free sugars (about 6 teaspoons). If you crave something sweet, fresh fruit should always be the priority. Frozen fruits, canned fruits in juice rather than syrup, and dried fruits with no added sugar are also good options. When other dessert options are chosen, ensure that they are low in sugar and consume small portions. Watch out for low fat options, as these are often high in added sugars. Limit the amount of sugar or honey added to foods and avoid sweetening your beverages.

you previously did not have time to make.

#### **Limit your fat intake**

Limiting total fat intake to less than 30% of total energy intake, of which no more than 10% should come from saturated fat. Prefer foods that contain healthy sources of unsaturated fats, such as fish and nuts. To limit saturated fats, trim excess fat from meat and poultry and choose skinless options. Reduce foods such as red and fatty meats, butter and full-fat dairy products, palm oil, coconut oil, solid shortening and lard.

Avoid trans fats as much as possible. Read nutrition labels to ensure that partially hydrogenated oils are not listed in the ingredients. If food labels are not available, avoid foods which commonly contain trans fats such as processed and fried foods.

#### **Consume enough fibre**

Fibre contributes to a healthy digestive system and offers a prolonged feeling of fullness, which helps prevent overeating. To ensure an adequate fibre intake, aim to include vegetables, fruit, pulses and wholegrain foods in all meals. Wholegrains foods include oats, brown pasta and rice, quinoa and whole-wheat bread and wraps.

#### **Stay hydrated**

Good hydration is crucial for optimal health. Drinking water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages is a simple way to limit your intake of sugar and excess calories. To enhance its taste, fresh or frozen fruits like berries or slices of citrus fruits may be added, as well as cucumber or herbs such as mint, lavender or rosemary.

Avoid drinking large amounts of strong coffee, strong tea, and especially caffeinated soft drinks and energy drinks. These may lead to dehydration and can negatively impact your sleeping patterns.

#### **Avoid alcohol or at least reduce your alcohol consumption**

Alcohol is not only a mind-altering and dependence-producing substance, harmful at any level consumed, but it also weakens the immune system. Thus, alcohol

use and especially heavy use undermines your body's ability to cope with infectious disease, including COVID-19.

It is recommended that alcohol in general be avoided, but especially when in self-quarantine. As a psychoactive substance, alcohol also affects your mental state and decision-making and makes you more vulnerable to risks, such as falls, injuries, or violence when under quarantine with someone else. Alcohol consumption is also known to increase symptoms of depression, anxiety, fear and panic – symptoms that can intensify during isolation and self-quarantine. Consuming alcohol is not a good coping mechanism, neither in the short nor long term, although you might think that it will help you deal with stress.

Alcohol also makes certain medications less effective, while increasing the potency and toxicity of others. Under no circumstances should you consume any type of alcoholic products as a preventive or treatment measure against COVID-19.

### **Enjoy family meals**

The social distancing associated with the COVID-19 outbreak has meant that many families are spending more time at home, which provides new opportunities to share meals together. Family meals are an important opportunity for parents to be role models for healthy eating, and for strengthening family relationships.

Increased time at home during this period may also present new opportunities to involve children in cooking healthy foods, which can help them acquire

important life skills that they can carry into adulthood. Letting children choose what vegetables to include in your meal may encourage them to eat them at the table. When involving children in cooking, it is important to keep meals simple and to teach children about proper food safety (including hand washing, cleaning surfaces and avoiding consumption of certain raw ingredients).

## **CONCLUSION**

Food play a vital role during COVID time. Eating a healthy diet is very important during the COVID-19 pandemic. What we eat and drink can affect our body's ability to prevent, fight and recover from infections. So all of us need to take care of diet we take.

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