

Food and Mental Wellbeing during COVID-19



At the current time, it's especially important to be kind to ourselves. Many of us are spending more time indoors and going through changes to the way we live and connect with others.

Thankfully, looking after ourselves and each other is something we can have a little more control over. Eating and drinking as well as we can is one important way to take care of our bodies and minds.

ROUTINE

Regular meals can help provide structure to new daily routines.



COOKING

Cooking can be relaxing and a welcome break from the news. Cooking with children is a great way to spend time together and keep them busy whilst home from school. Keeping nutritious ingredients in your store cupboard (e.g. beans, lentils, tinned oily fish, frozen veg, eggs, rice) can help to have easy meals on hand.



FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Fruits and vegetables contain a range of nutrients important for good mental health. Tinned, dried, juiced (small glass a day), fresh and frozen, all count towards our 5 a day.



BALANCE

Plenty of fruits and vegetables, wholegrain starchy foods and some protein foods, will provide a good supply of the nutrients we need. Including a starchy food at each meal helps to keep blood sugars stable and provides a regular supply of glucose to the brain.



Changes to our physical activity levels can affect our bowel habits. Drinking plenty of fluids and eating good sources of fibre can help to prevent constipation (e.g. wholegrains, oats, fruit and vegetables).

SNACK SWAPS

For some people, feelings of stress and worry can lead to increased snacking. It can be hard to resist biscuits, cakes and chocolate, if we are at home and they're in our cupboards. Making simple snack swaps is a positive way to take care of ourselves. Nutritious choices include fruits, chopped vegetables, multigrain toast, wholegrain cereals, oatcakes or a handful of unsalted nuts.



VITAMIN D

Sunlight exposure helps our bodies to make vitamin D. Being indoors more often, you might choose to take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D. These are available to buy in most supermarkets and pharmacies. If you have safe access to a garden space, enjoy some time outside.



HYDRATION

Drinking plenty of fluids (about 6-8 cups a day) can help us concentrate and think clearly. Some people find caffeine disrupts their sleep so include some caffeine-free drinks every day. Water is the top choice for quenching thirst.



ALCOHOL

Having a drink might seem like a good way to switch off but alcohol can affect our weight and mental health. Try to keep within the maximum recommended 14 units a week.



For trusted information about nutrition visit

<https://www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html> and www.nhs.uk

If you have specific dietary needs, continue to follow any advice given by a dietitian or other health professional.