



# Nutrition in the Recovery of COVID-19

**Now, it is important to restore gaps in your diet, rebuild any lost muscle, regain your strength and ensure you are on the road to better health.**

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, general weakness, pain, difficulty breathing as well as changes to taste and smell. These symptoms can affect your appetite and ability to eat, making it difficult for you to meet your nutritional needs.

Being bedridden, inactive and your body fighting infection may cause some muscle and strength loss.



## Restoring gaps in your diet

- A well balanced diet can help with your recovery, making up for any nutrients you may have missed while feeling unwell.
- It is important to have a carbohydrate source at each meal such as bread, cereal, rice, pasta or potatoes to provide you with energy to recover.
- Protein is also essential in the recovery process, helping to regain any lost muscle or strength. See below for more details.
- Try to consume 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. These provide you with essential vitamins and minerals to support the immune function.
- While in isolation, bedridden or less active, it may have been difficult to get enough vitamin D from the sun. Consider taking a 10µg vitamin D supplement.

Fresh, frozen and canned veg are all good options



Consider a multivitamin supplement if you are struggling to have 5 a day

Fortify milk with extra protein by adding skimmed milk powder (2-4tbsp to 1 pint) or buy Protein Milk



## Rebuilding Muscle and Strength

- Protein is important to help rebuild any muscle and strength lost while fighting COVID-19.
- Try to eat protein rich foods at each meal and include as snacks throughout your day. These include meat, fish, eggs, dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese), beans, lentils, nuts and tofu.
- Include nourishing drinks such as milk, milkshakes and hot chocolate to add extra protein to your day.
- Calcium and vitamin D combined are essential for strong bones. Sources of calcium include dairy products, green leafy vegetables, soya beans and tofu.





## Managing a Poor Appetite

- It can take some time following COVID-19 to regain your appetite. The following tips may help:
- Eat more of the foods you enjoy - these can make you feel better.
- Eat nutrient dense foods where possible; choose full fat products, add cream, cheese, butter, oil, milk powder, ground nuts or honey to foods like curries, soups, scrambled eggs or on toast or scones.
- Try small, more frequent meals and snacks.
- Avoid filling up with non-nourishing drinks before eating such as squash, fizzy drinks.

### Snack ideas

Cheese with crackers, hummus with breadsticks, ice-cream with tinned fruit, yogurt, mixed nuts, Bombay or trail mix, rice pudding pot, scone with jam, flapjack, peanut butter with rice cakes, crisps, cereal bars.



## Monitoring Weight Loss

Keep an eye on your weight from week to week. If you are unable to weigh yourself, look out for other signs of weight loss such as loose fitting clothes, rings and watches.

If you continue to struggle with weight loss, please seek advice from a medical professional.

- A simple online tool can tell you if you are losing too much weight <https://www.malnutritionselfscreening.org/self-screening.html>
- Oral Nutritional Supplements may have been prescribed by a dietitian

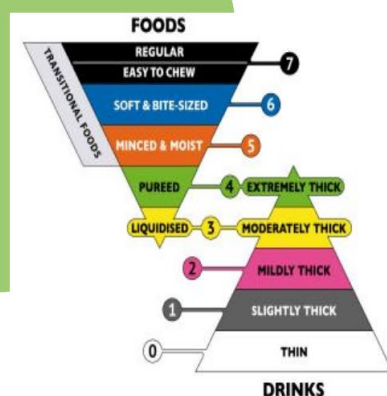
or doctor while in hospital to increase your overall energy and protein intake. Take these in addition to your usual meals and snacks. Your dietitian or GP can advise whether you still require these at home.



## Swallowing Difficulties

- Following illness, especially if you have been treated with a ventilating machine, the muscles you use to swallow can become weak.
- It may take some time for you to return to normal safe swallowing.
- Changing the consistency and texture of foods and drinks can make them safer to swallow.
- The IDDSI framework describes food textures and fluid consistencies. Fluid consistencies vary between Level 0 - Level 4 and food textures vary between Level 4 - Level 7.

Follow guidelines set by your Speech and Language Therapist.







Wash your hands  
with soap and  
water for at least  
20 seconds

## Food Shopping

- Check the opening times of your local supermarkets – they may have special times reserved for older or vulnerable people.
- Ensure to wash your hands when returning from the supermarket and wash your hands again once you have put your food items away.
- Keep your store cupboard with a supply of non-perishable items such as tinned foods. Have frozen vegetables and meals in the freezer as an easy option if you cannot get to the shops as regularly as usual.
- You may be able to access meals via home delivery services or local council and charities.



## Returning to your Activities of Daily Living

- Activities of daily living are everyday tasks such as walking, cooking, hoovering, climbing the stairs, tying your shoelaces and gardening.
- Physical activity combined with nutrition can help you get back to your normal routines and help regain your muscle strength.
- Exercise does not need to be strenuous.
- Walking in the garden, dancing in the living room, walking up and down the stairs or taking part in an online exercise class all count as physical activity, and can be done whilst social distancing.

If you have been in hospital or bedridden for a long period of time ensure you follow the advice provided by the Physiotherapist.



**'Making the Most of Every Bite' Cookbook has been designed for patients who have been told by a healthcare professional that they should be eating a diet that is high in protein and calories. Many tips and recipe ideas can be found inside**



**Available to download:**  
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/2/primarycare/community-funded-schemes/nutrition-supports/making-the-most-of-every-bite-cookbook.pdf>

