

Eating and Drinking Well in Later Life and Coronavirus (COVID 19)

Top Practical Tips for those at risk of malnutrition whilst self-isolating

Spot the signs of unintended weight loss

e.g. reduced appetite, lose clothes and jewellery, no interest in food and drink, reduced muscle strength.

- Use the **Patients Association Nutrition Checklist** to see if you or the person you care for is at risk of malnutrition [here](#).
- If you have specific nutrition needs, continue to follow the advice made by your dietitian or other health care professional.



Spot the signs for swallowing difficulties

when eating or drinking e.g. choking or coughing at mealtimes, sensation of food getting stuck in the throat, frequent heartburn bringing food back up, hoarse voice or voice sounds 'wet'.

- During the corona virus pandemic your GP is ready to help with any new or ongoing medical needs. Don't delay in contacting your GP/ Practice Nurse who will be able to offer advice and a specialist referral.



Current guidelines advise those aged 65 and over to take 10 micrograms of Vitamin D each day as a supplement, available at supermarkets and pharmacies.



Ensure good mouth care to maintain the ability to eat, avoid mouth or gum infections.

- Brush teeth and gums with fluoride toothpaste twice daily, clean dentures regularly.



Stock up on store cupboard items

- These include basic foods, frozen food and meals as you may not have access to food as regularly as normal. You may be able to access meals through home delivery services e.g. Wiltshire Farm Foods, local council and charities.



If you are at risk of malnutrition and need extra nourishment

- Adapt meals and snacks by adding small amounts of high energy (calories), protein, vitamins and minerals without increasing portion sizes e.g. use full fat dairy products (whole milk, full fat yoghurts); add cheese, butter & cream to mashed potato; add cream, skimmed milk powder to full fat milk.
- Choose food that's easy to prepare and you enjoy but eat a 'little and often' – introduce small snacks between meals and keep favourite snacks to hand.



Stay hydrated to avoid health problems e.g. constipation, risk of urine infections and falls (water, milk, juices, squash, tea and coffee all count).

- Aim to drink 6-8 glasses/mugs a day. Chilled drinks can stimulate the appetite but don't have them too close to mealtimes as may fill you up.
- Choose drinks where possible such as milky drinks (malted drinks, hot chocolate, milky coffee, smoothies and milkshakes) which can provide energy, protein, vitamins and minerals.



Try to create the best possible mealtime experience

- Make food look appealing; taste changes as we age so enhance the flavour of food e.g. by adding herbs and mild spices.
- Eat together if you are self-isolating with someone and have a relaxed environment e.g. background music.
- Take activities involving movement at home where possible to help stimulate appetite e.g. stretching and chair based exercises, dancing or moving to music, activities such as baking, housework, gardening, growing vegetables.



Always follow advice from trusted sources for reliable information. There are no specific foods or supplements which can prevent catching Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Keep in touch with friends/family to help reduce feeling of loneliness and isolation by phone or if access to new technology, social media and video call websites (e.g. Facebook, Zoom, Skype).

For more information:

- COVID 19/Coronavirus – advice for the general public - [here](#)
- Eating and Drinking Well with Dementia – A Guide for Family Carers and Friends - [here](#)
- Older People's Essential Nutrition leaflet - [here](#)
- Hydration leaflet - [here](#)