



# Keeping up with healthy food: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Getting healthy food is important to maintaining a healthy routine, especially during the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The good news—there are resources, people and helpful tips that can guide and support you during this time.

## **The overall food supply is strong**

Currently, essentials like toilet paper, cleaning wipes, fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and bottled water have been decreasing on store shelves as many people have started to buy more than they may need for a given time frame.

But large retailers are stocking shelves every day and continue to manage their inventories. Transportation and food supply have not halted, and with colleges, schools and restaurants temporarily closed, food and other supplies are being rerouted to retailers so shoppers can have increased access.

In fact, the chief operating officer of Costco recently said, “Our stores are getting stocked every day. Our suppliers are working around the clock and the flow of goods is strong.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Senior-only shopping hours**

Many grocery retailers have begun “senior-only shopping” time frames—typically in the early morning—exclusively for seniors 65 and older, people with disabilities and people who are pregnant (this may vary based on store). This allows people that may be at a higher risk to shop with smaller crowds and a broader inventory. Check with your local stores for these set-aside hours.



## Tips for in-store grocery shopping

- Consider shopping at smaller stores that are not chains as they may have more inventory.
- Get less expensive cuts of meat that may be in stock and are great to use in casseroles, soups, stews, burritos, etc.—for bigger meals with lots of leftovers.
- In place of meat, you can try beans, legumes, eggs, and canned and frozen fish—less expensive but nutritious sources of protein that can be used in many ways. Also, canned fish does not require refrigeration.
- If fresh fruits, vegetables and meats are available, many of those items can be frozen to use for future meals.
- If fresh vegetables are limited, try canned vegetables and beans. Properly rinse and drain them before cooking.
- Frozen fruits, berries and vegetables are usually just as nutritious as their fresh counterparts. They are available year-round and are often sold in large bags.
- Canned fruit packed in water or its own juice is an option if fresh fruit is not available.
- Powdered milk and/or evaporated canned milk (not sweetened condensed milk) are lower-cost alternatives to dairy-based milk. Simply add the amount of water that is recommended on the package or can.



## Nutrition and help with preparing meals

- To help you get the nutrition you need, consider eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat/fat-free dairy or dairy-free options.
- If you are on a special diet from your doctor or care team, follow that diet as closely as you can.
- If you have one, use a slow cooker or pressure cooker to prepare soups, stews and other mixed dishes, which may provide leftovers for more than one day.
- Frequently wash your hands before and after meal preparation and eating.
- Keep foods at proper temperatures before and during cooking and when they are stored after a meal.
- When preparing meals, keep vegetables separate from raw meats, poultry and fish.
- Throw away foods and beverages if dates have expired.



## Grocery and restaurant pick-up and delivery options

For people who need and want to remain in-home, consider these convenient options for shopping your local groceries and restaurants:

**Grocery:** Use an online grocery delivery service, which allows you to shop online from local groceries, superstores and pet stores in your area, and have the products delivered right to your door.

**Restaurants:**

- Use an online restaurant delivery service, which delivers you food from local restaurants that are still open with pick-up or drive-thru options.
- Many local restaurants are also offering pick-up or “no-contact delivery” of food or bulk meals, which allow you to support local businesses and still practice healthy social distancing.
- Try to order food that meets your special diet and includes nutritious items. If your doctor or care team has suggested a low-salt and/or low-fat diet, ask the restaurant how foods are prepared and if specific seasonings can be used in smaller amounts.



### Additional helpful tips for eating on a budget

**USDA ChooseMyPlate: Healthy Eating on a Budget**

Tips, tools and information for meal and grocery planning, shopping the aisles, preparing healthy meals, and more.

[www.choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/budget](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/budget)

**Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Eat Right**

Food fact sheets on nutrition, planning and prepping meals, vitamins and supplements, resources and more.

[www.eatright.org/food](http://www.eatright.org/food)

**FoodSafety.gov: 4 Steps to Food Safety**

Steps and guidance on the four simple steps to help keep your family safe from food poisoning at home.

[www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/4-steps-to-food-safety](http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/4-steps-to-food-safety)

## Food support and assistance

For additional support on food assistance and meal delivery, connect with the organizations below.

### Your medical insurance

Some health plans may be providing eligible members with food resources, including meal delivery. Call the number on the back of your medical insurance ID card to see what benefits may be available.

### Feeding America Affiliate Food Bank

Connects you with the local food banks in your area, providing information on the food pantries and feeding programs nearest you. Resources and requirements vary by food bank.

[www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank](http://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank)

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

(Formerly known as food stamps)

Money to purchase food at grocery stores, farmers markets and other retailers. The average benefit is about \$127 per month per person. Your household must meet certain requirements to be eligible.

[www.fns.usda.gov/snap](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap)

### Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program

Money to purchase certain healthy foods for pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, as well as infants and children under the age of 5. Nutrition education and breastfeeding support is also provided.

[www.fns.usda.gov/wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic)

### Eldercare and Area Agencies on Aging

Addresses the needs and concerns of seniors at the regional and local levels, including nutrition challenges, offering support like home-delivered meals.

[www.eldercare.acl.gov](http://www.eldercare.acl.gov)

**1-800-677-1116 (TTY: 711),**

Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 8 p.m., Eastern time

### Meals on Wheels

Provides free or low-cost home-delivered meals to seniors. Focuses on caring for individuals whose diminished mobility makes it difficult to shop for food, prepare meals or socialize with others.

[www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org)

### 211 Helpline

Provides community information and referrals to social services for everyday needs and in times of crisis, including nutrition support. Calls are free and confidential.

[www.helplinecenter.org](http://www.helplinecenter.org)

**Dial 211** from any phone

## Learn more about COVID-19

For more information, go to [CDC.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

### Reference

<sup>1</sup>[www.nytimes.com/2020/03/15/business/coronavirus-food-shortages.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/15/business/coronavirus-food-shortages.html)

This information is provided for educational purposes only. It is not to be used for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Consult your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns. Consult your doctor before beginning any new diet or exercise regimen.