

ROAD TO RECOVERY

Nutrition

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Why is it important to eat well to support your recovery from long COVID?



Many people lose their appetite and eat less when they have long COVID. You may find that you have difficulties with shopping, preparing food, and eating your usual size of meals. This may be because you feel tired or weak.

Due to long COVID, you may have changes in your sense of smell and/or taste, shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing, dry mouth, nausea, and constipation. This can make it difficult to get the right nutrition you need to help you do your day-to-day activities and could make your recovery longer.

Eating well is important as your body needs energy, protein, vitamins, and minerals to help you recover from long COVID. Having a good intake of protein and energy-rich foods supports you with rebuilding muscles, maintaining your immune system, and increasing your energy levels.

Why is it important to eat well to support your recovery from long COVID?





Minimizing weight loss and regaining/maintaining muscle strength are important. Try tracking your weight and look out for signs of weight loss, such as your clothing becoming loose. Keeping a diary of the food that you eat for 3 to 7 days can be helpful to check how much you are able to eat, and look for patterns or times in the day where you are most hungry and can tolerate food. Eat your biggest meal when your appetite is best. This may be at breakfast time rather than at the traditional evening meal.

Some ideas for maintaining healthy nutritional intake



- Eat more calories and protein.
- Try to eat little and often. This may include three small healthy meals plus nourishing snacks/drinks in between until your appetite picks up.
- Choose protein-rich foods (such as meat, fish, eggs, cheese, beans, nuts, seeds, and lentils) and energy-rich foods (such as avocados, yogurt, whole grains, smoothies, and fruit and vegetables with spreads).
- Keep well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.
- If you are struggling to eat because of taste and smell changes, please visit [this topic](#) in *MyGuide* for ideas on how to improve the taste of food.

- If you are prescribed oral nutrition supplements (such as Boost or Ensure drinks), take these between meals so they don't affect your appetite at mealtimes.
 - If you're struggling with swallowing, speak to a health care professional – thickened supplements may be safer for you to take.

Speak to a doctor or another health care professional if you have concerns regarding unintentional weight loss or muscle weakness.

Some ideas for adding extra energy and protein into food

- Add extra beef, chicken, tuna, tofu, paneer, or seitan to casseroles or stews, vegetable dishes, soups, sauces, salads, stir-fries, curries, and other dishes.
- Add beans, peas, or lentils to stir-fries, casseroles, salads, soups, and other dishes
- Choose higher fat milk or milk options.
- Choose Greek or Icelandic yogurt (full fat) instead of regular yogurt.
- Choose higher fat cheeses (at least 28% milkfat).
- Add protein powder or skim milk powder to smoothies.
- Add cheese to eggs, salads, casseroles, or sandwiches.
- Choose tofu or cottage cheese as a snack.
- Choose boiled eggs at breakfast or as a snack.
- Add peanut or almond butter to crackers, toast, or curries.

- Choose nuts or trail mix for a snack.
- Add healthy fats and oils to your foods, like olive oil, avocado oil, butter, whipping cream, cream cheese, and sour cream.
- Add high fat/protein spreads to snacks (such as hummus, guacamole, cream cheese).



Vitamins and mineral supplements



If you are only eating small amounts or are unable to eat all the recommended food groups then you may wish to consider taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement.

A single daily multivitamin is usually safe; however, some vitamins and minerals are dangerous if taken as a single nutrient supplement or if taken in large amounts. If you take too much, you may experience

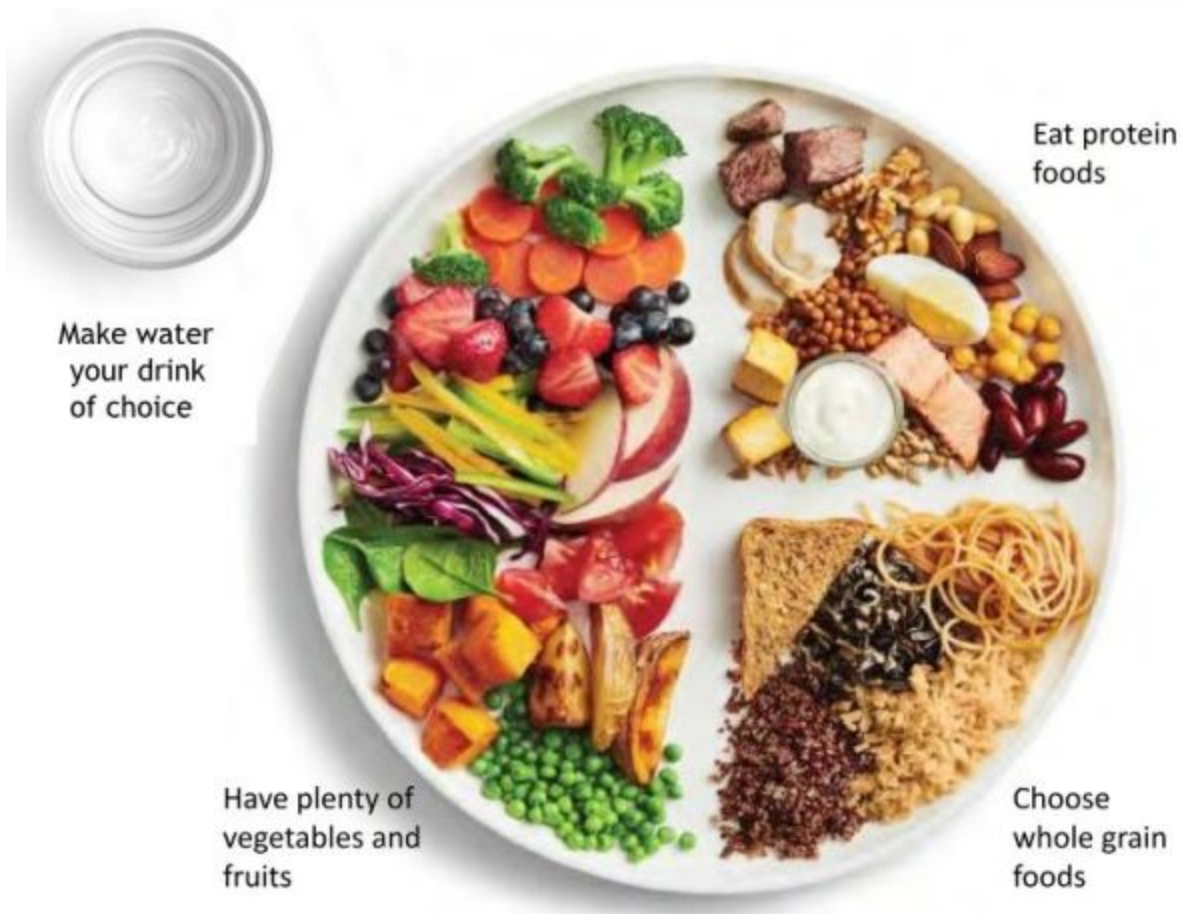
unpleasant side effects.

Speak to a health care professional or registered dietitian if you have any concerns or questions before taking any supplements.

What to eat in general to support your health

As per Canada's Food Guide, key recommendations are:

- Have plenty of vegetables and fruits
- Eat protein-rich foods
- Make water your drink of choice
- Choose whole grain foods



For more information please visit – <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>

How to contact a registered dietitian

For information and advice related to healthy eating and nutrition, call 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing) to speak with a registered dietitian. Translation services are available in over 130 languages.

- [Email a HealthLinkBC Dietitian](#) your questions about food and nutrition.
- Visit HealthLink BC's [Healthy Eating](#) page to learn about making healthy eating and lifestyle choices.

Where to next?

- Check the [Taste and Smell Changes](#) section in *MyGuide* for ideas on how to improve the taste of food.
- Visit [this website](#) for more information on what to eat to support your health
- [Email a HealthLinkBC Dietitian](#) your questions about food and nutrition.
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