

# Nutrition and Hydration

Information for patients with,  
and recovering from,  
COVID-19





# Good nutrition and hydration helps to support your body in fighting COVID-19 virus.

Good nutrition will help to rebuild your muscle strength and function as part of your rehabilitation. Even though you may not feel hungry or thirsty, it is important that you eat and drink well.

Below is some general information to help you to maximise your fluid and food intake. If you have specific dietary requirements, please check with a healthcare professional that the information is safe for you to follow.

## What you need to do

### 1. Stay hydrated

Having enough fluid in your body helps it to function well. Good hydration will help with your mobility and recovery.



- Aim to have eight cups of fluid each day.
- Take small, frequent sips of liquids every few minutes if you are not able to drink large amounts at one time.
- All fluids (except alcohol) count, but try to include nourishing fluids such as milky drinks or juices.
- Aim to drink enough fluid to keep your urine a pale straw colour.
- If you have a raised temperature, you may need to drink more fluids.



## 2. Take in enough energy and protein to be well nourished

You may require more nutrition than usual to support your body during, and after, illness. Restricting your energy intake with the aim of reducing body weight is not appropriate during acute illness or recovery. This is due to the risk of reducing muscle mass, strength and function.

- Include a protein-containing food and/or drink at every meal e.g. milk, milk-based food (or alternatives if unable to have dairy) meat, fish, pulses, beans, eggs.



- Whilst in hospital choose hospital menu items coded '↑' as these are higher in energy.
- If your appetite is poor and/or eating is difficult due to breathlessness:
  - have three small meals and three high protein/higher energy snacks per day e.g. custard, rice-pudding, cheese and biscuits.
  - you may be prescribed Oral Nutritional Supplement drinks (e.g. Fortisip or Fresubin). These provide extra energy and protein, and essential vitamins and minerals. To make the most of your appetite for food at mealtimes, try sipping them after a meal.



## Practical tips to help you to eat and drink well

Reduced taste or smell	<p>Choose strongly flavoured foods, e.g. spicy, citrus.</p> <p>Use sauces or extra salt/pepper to add more taste to meals.</p>
Breathlessness	<p>Choose soft (easy chew) foods and nourishing drinks.</p> <p>Eat slowly and take smaller bites.</p> <p>Try to eat more at the times when you feel less breathless.</p>
Dry mouth	<p>Sip drinks regularly, choose moist foods and ensure good mouthcare.</p> <p>Try chewing gum, or sucking on fruit sweets and mints to stimulate saliva production.</p>

### 3. Advice for home

It is important to eat and drink well at home for your ongoing recovery and rehabilitation. On discharge from hospital you may still experience some effects on your appetite or nutritional intake from COVID-19.

For help with access to food whilst self-isolating (If you don't have friends or family who can assist) volunteers are available to support with shopping. Please ring Leeds City Council Helpline on: **0113 378 1877** to arrange.

## Where can I find more information

### **Food First booklet - Advice for Adults with a Poor Appetite.**

This is produced by Leeds Community Healthcare and Leeds Teaching Hospitals. Please ask for a copy from the nursing staff on discharge.

### **Managing Adult Malnutrition:**

[www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/covid19](http://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/covid19)

Use the 'resources finder' to help you find the right information on good nutrition during or after COVID-19 illness.

### **Lancashire Teaching Hospitals online resource:**

<https://covidpatientsupport.lthtr.nhs.uk>

Covid-19 Supporting Your Recovery - **eating well to help you recover.**

Speak to your nurse if you have any concerns about your eating and drinking while you are in hospital. If you have any concerns when you go home, please speak to your GP.





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