

TIPS AND ADVICE FOR SENIORS

EATING HEALTHY, KEEPING TO A ROUTINE,
AND STAYING ACTIVE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

To better guide you





1 FOOD

Nutrition	3
Risk of malnutrition	6
Hydratation	7
Elimination	7

2 MENTAL HEALTH

Maintaining a routine	8
Taking care of yourself	8

3 PHYSICAL HEALTH

Physical exercise	10
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4 CONTACT INFORMATION

Useful telephone numbers and sites to visit	17
References	18

Eating healthy and staying active are essential to maintaining good health. The exceptional situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is changing many aspects of your life and can have negative effects on your diet, as well as your mental and physical health.

In this guide, you will find tips and advice to help you, despite COVID-19, to:

- Stay healthy;
- Preserve your autonomy;
- Take care of yourself;
- Limit your risk of falling;
- Conserve your physical strength.

This pamphlet is inspired by the document Tips and Advice for Seniors: Eating Healthy, Keeping to a Routine, and Staying Active during the COVID-19 Pandemic, CIUSSS de l'Estrie – Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke, 2020



1

FOOD

During a quarantine situation, mealtimes—typically a time for enjoyment and socialization—are disrupted. To make sure eating remains a pleasant experience, it is important to keep to a routine with both your meals and snacks.

Why not consider sharing a meal with friends or family members via a video call?

Nutrition

Tips for grocery shopping by phone or online

- **Think ahead:** Don't wait until the last minute to place your order. Demand is very high right now, and wait times are longer than usual.
- **Provide as much detail as possible** to make sure you get the products you like. This will help to avoid unpleasant situations such as certain brands or formats being unavailable.

For example, your grocery order might look like this:

- X-brand light tuna, tomato and onion flavour, 85-g size;
- X-brand liquid nutritional supplement, Plus Calories version, chocolate flavour, 6 bottles;
- Check the flyers or websites (e.g., iga.net, maxi.ca, metro.ca) for inspiration and information about the foods you'd like to cook;
- **Ask for help from someone close to you** who is familiar with your eating habits.

Easy meal ideas

- ¼ cup cottage cheese + ½ bagel + 1 cup chocolate milk + ½ cup apple sauce;
- French toast (1 egg + a splash of milk + vanilla and sugar to taste) + ½ cup berries + ¾ cup vanilla yogurt;
- 1-2 boiled eggs + sliced tomato + 1-2 slices of toast + butter + ¾ cup yogurt;
- 1 cup prepared vegetable soup + sliced cooked chicken + crackers;
- Seasoned frozen fish fillet or sliced cooked chicken + ½ cup quick-cooking seasoned rice (e.g., Uncle Ben's Bistro Express) + ½ cup frozen peas.

COVID-19 is not spread through food, whether locally grown or imported. You can become infected by COVID-19 by touching a surface contaminated with the virus and then touching your face. However, this is not the main mode of transmission.

To avoid being caught unprepared when it comes to cooking, we recommend that you keep nutritious foods on hand to make sure you can whip up light and tasty meals at a moment's notice. The foods listed are suggestions only; don't hesitate to customize this list based on your tastes and preferences!

Remember:

- You do not need to wash all your purchases;
- **Rinse your fresh fruits and vegetables** frais before eating them. Running them under water while rubbing the surfaces is sufficient;
- **Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (as soon as you get home, after putting away your purchases, after receiving a delivery, before cooking, before eating, etc.).

Foods to have on hand

Room temperature

- Oatmeal, cream of wheat
- Bananas
- Onions, potatoes
- Peanut butter
- Rice (regular or seasoned quick-cooking rice)
- Pasta
- Bread
- Nuts

Refrigerated

- Milk, yogurt, cheese
- Eggs
- Fruit and vegetables
- Meat, poultry, fish

Canned foods

- Tuna, salmon, sardines, mackerel (plain or flavoured)
- Pasta sauce
- Pea soup, lentil soup, baked beans
- Canned vegetables (tomatoes, mixed, etc.)

Freezer

- Frozen fruit and vegetables of your choice (blueberries, corn, peas, etc.)
- Cooked meat or poultry
- Prepared meals (with meat or more than 15 g of protein per serving)
- Fish fillets (plain or seasoned)
- Supply of bread, bagels, raisin bread, etc.

Tip: When cooking, make extra so you can have leftovers. Freeze them for days when you have less energy.

Protein: a priority for every meal

The body does not have large reserves of protein, which is why it is important to have protein with every meal, including breakfast. Protein is important for your muscles, bones, and immune system. Protein helps your body to better protect itself against falls and their consequences and to avoid sores and infections. Here are some tips for adding more protein to your meals:

Breakfast



Milk

- Put some in your coffee;
- Make your oatmeal or cream of wheat with milk;
- Have a glass of plain or chocolate milk, or fortified soy beverage, with your meal;
- Drink the milk left at the bottom of your cereal bowl;
- If you can't tolerate milk, try lactose-free milk.



Eggs

- Cook them over-easy, scrambled, poached, boiled, or in an omelet;
- Hard-boiled eggs can be kept in the refrigerator for a week;
- Eat at least two in your sandwiches or omelets at lunch and supper.



Yogurt

- Eat it plain or with fruit, nuts, or cereal;
- If you don't have much appetite, have a yogurt drink;
- Try Greek or Icelandic yogurt (skyr), which contains twice as much protein as the regular variety.



Nuts or nut butter

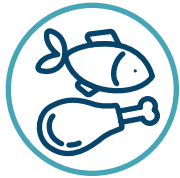
- Spread peanut or almond butter on your toast;
- Add nuts to your cereal or yogurt;
- They can be whole, chopped, or ground.



Cheese

- Try different varieties such as cottage cheese, which is very high in protein and easy to chew.

Lunch and supper



Meat, poultry, fish, and seafood

- If chewing is more difficult for you, opt for ground meat or poultry; have fish or eggs more often;
- Try different varieties of flavoured canned fish (tuna, mackerel, etc.);
- Eat tofu and legumes (e.g., chickpeas, lentils). Add some to vegetable soups, stews, or sauces;
- If you don't have much appetite, opt for pea or lentil soups with bread and cheese.



Cheese

- Have some on your vegetables and in your meals.



Milk

- Add some to your soups;
- Finish the meal with a milk-based dessert (e.g., yogurt, tapioca, pudding, blancmange);
- Add skim milk powder to your food (e.g., soups, mashed potatoes, cold or hot cereal).



Risk of malnutrition

Have you lost some weight in the past six months without trying?

Have you been eating less than usual for more than a week?

If you answered yes to these two questions, you are at risk of malnutrition, i.e., loss of muscle mass, strength, and independence. Because of that, the advice in this guide is all the more important for you.

Elimination

It is important to maintain your ability to go to the bathroom independently. For this reason, it is recommended that you not start wearing incontinence underwear too soon. Walking to the bathroom is also a simple form of exercise that promotes regularity.

If you experience new incontinence (urinary or fecal), make sure to maintain a regular bathroom schedule to try to limit the incontinence.

If you lose weight unintentionally:

- Make sure you eat at least three meals and ideally two or three snacks a day;
- Eat your favourite foods;
- Eat the main meal before the soup;
- Opt for high-protein snacks (cheese, 3.25% milk, chocolate milk, nuts, peanut butter, etc.);
- Choose high-calorie desserts (pastries, pies, cakes, milk-based desserts, etc.);
- Avoid so-called low-fat foods; opt for regular versions;
- Increase the amount of oil, butter, margarine, or mayonnaise in your food;
- Have a glass of milk, chocolate milk, or a liquid nutritional supplement between meals or with your medications;
- Look for liquid nutritional supplements with “Plus Calories” written on the label, such as Boost Plus Calories, Ensure Plus Calories, Equate Plus Calories, etc.

Hydratation

Remember to drink plenty of fluids!

It is important to drink at least 1.5 L of fluids per day, or six 250-ml (1-cup) glasses, and even more if you have a fever.

Prefer non-alcoholic and caffeine-free beverages (water, milk, juice, herbal tea). If you're having trouble drinking this much:

- Always have a glass within easy reach;
- Drink more water than normal when taking your medicine;
- Set up a routine if you tend to forget to drink (e.g., 1 glassful at every meal and 1 glassful at 10 a.m., 3 p.m., and 7 p.m.).

2

MENTAL HEALTH

It is also important to maintain a routine when it comes to activities of daily living (washing, eating, etc.), instrumental activities of daily living (preparing meals, making your bed, doing the dishes, etc.), and leisure activities.

This will help you to maintain your bearings, reduce your stress levels, and improve your quality of life.

Maintain a routine

Maintain a daily routine to keep your spirits up

- Go to bed and get up at regular times. Avoid taking long or multiple naps.
- Take your shower and get dressed every day.
- Eat your meals at regular times.
- Plan your schedule to spread out your tasks, occupations, and hobbies throughout the week.
- Identify people you can confide in if you need to.
- Take breaks from following the news. Hearing about the pandemic constantly can be upsetting.
- Every day, engage in a meaningful activity that brings you joy and makes you feel good.

Take care of yourself

Quarantine and isolation can cause a lot of stress, anxiety, fear, and even boredom. It is therefore important to create a calm home environment by lowering the noise level, opening the curtains to let in the natural light, and finding new hobbies.

Choose activities that make you feel good:

- Call family members or friends;
- Look at photo albums;
- Meditate.

Keep your brain active:

- Make sure you wear your hearing aids and glasses;
- Use your calendar, clock, or watch to keep track of time;
- Incorporate brain-boosting activities into your schedule, such as crosswords, sudoku, and puzzles.

Why not pick up a new activity?

There are many activities that you can start doing with no prior experience. Learning a new activity will also help to keep your mind sharp.

Examples of leisure activities to try:

- Crafting, painting, knitting, crocheting
- Dancing to your favourite music
- Gardening
- Reading a book
- Cooking
- Singing
- Writing your autobiography. Watch inspiring videos by Jeannette Bertrand about how to write your autobiography. <http://centreavantage.ca/ecrire-sa-vie/>



Virtual leisure activities are also available (with Internet access):

“Les fermiers” TV series

- This series of 10 episodes follows the seasons and life on the farm, introducing viewers to the men and women who work the land.

<https://www.tv5unis.ca/les-fermiers/saisons/1>

Planète Jardin

- Magazine, articles about plants and edibles (fruit trees, aromatics, vegetables, and berries). <https://planetejardin.ca/>

L'Actualité magazine

- Feature articles, analyses, and reflections.

<https://lactualite.com/>

La fabrique culturelle

- Télé-Québec's digital platform that promotes Québec's arts and culture scene.

<https://www.facebook.com/LaFabriqueculturelle.tv/>

Orchestre symphonique de Montréal

- Rebroadcasts and new content every week. A great opportunity to enjoy beautiful music!

<http://www.osm.ca/>

National Arts Centre of Canada

- Musical and other performances available on their Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/CanadasNAC.CNAduCanada/>

Notre temps

- Free online games (crosswords, memory games, etc.)

www.notretemps.com/jeux

Tricotin

- Bank of free knitting patterns and tips.

<https://www.tricotin.com/fr/modeles-gratuits.html>



3

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Inactivity can have a significant impact on your muscles and increases the risk of injury, falls, and sores. That's why you need to stay active, even if it's inside your home.

Physical exercise

Make sure to wear **closed, non-slip shoes**, when walking indoors or doing the exercises in this guide.

- Stand up every hour;
- Move around as much as you can;
- Walk regularly indoors or outdoors, if possible.

Here are some exercises that you can do every day, alternating from one day to the next. Start off slowly. If you feel pain, decrease your range of motion or stop exercising. It is important to do the exercises **at your own pace**.

Other ways to stay active:

- Maintain your independence for personal hygiene activities (washing, brushing your hair, shaving, brushing your teeth, etc.). These are all opportunities for you to move around;
- Move your arms and legs on your own as soon as possible, even while lying in bed;
- Do as many activities as possible on your own to maintain your physical strength and abilities;
- Make your bed. This is a great opportunity to get some exercise!

For additional exercises

Québec's **Move 50+** online fitness platform offers free training programs to help quarantined seniors stay active and minimize the risk of physical deconditioning.

<https://move50plus.ca/>

You can also check out the exercises in the **Le GO pour bouger!** program, which was created to help you stay active and improve your physical fitness based on your previous activity level and current abilities.

<https://santemontreal.qc.ca/en/public/advice-and-prevention/physical-activity-for-seniors>

DAY 1

1. Shoulder flexion

- Sit in a chair with your back straight and look straight ahead.
- Lift one arm in front of you as high as you can while keeping your elbow straight.
- Return your arm to its original position.
- Repeat 10 times with each arm.

Note: Do not shrug your shoulder or arch your back. Move only your arm.



2. Knee flexion

- Sit in a chair with your back straight.
- Lift your foot by flexing your toes toward you, then lower it to the ground.
- Repeat 10 times per knee.



3. Walking in place in a seated position

- Sit in a chair without leaning on the backrest.
- Lift your right thigh, then lower it. Then lift your left thigh and lower it. Continue alternating thighs so that the movement resembles walking in place.
- Repeat 10-15 times per leg.



4. Foot and ankle flexion

- Sit in a chair with your back straight and your feet slightly apart.
- Keeping your heels on the ground, lift the balls of your feet as high as possible, then lift the heels while keeping your toes on the floor.
- Repeat 10 times.

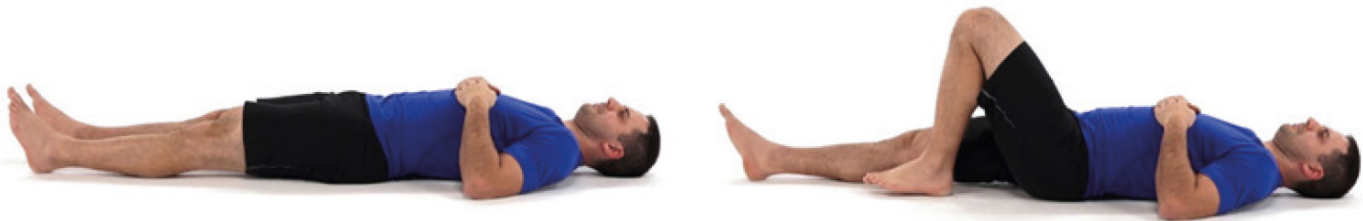


DAY 2

1. Hip flexion lying down

- Lie on your back, on your bed, with your legs extended.
- Slide the heel of one foot on the bed towards your buttock by bending your knee as far as you can. If you have a total hip prosthesis, do not exceed the range of motion of your hip.
- Lower the knee to the bed, extending the leg as far as possible. Then repeat with your other leg.
- Repeat the exercise 10 times per leg.

Note: When performing this movement, keep your knee parallel to the centre of your body. Do not move it inwards or outwards.



2. Bridge (buttocks strengthening)

- Lie on your back, on your bed, with your knees bent.
- Raise your buttocks off the ground by contracting your abdominals and buttocks until your trunk forms a line with your legs.
- Resume the initial position and repeat a total of 10 times.
- Even if you can't lift your buttocks off the bed, the exercise will still help to strengthen your buttocks.



3. Standing up

- Sit on the edge of your bed, couch, or a fixed chair. Make sure your feet are touching the ground.
- Open your feet hip-width apart and lean forward so that your shoulders are over your feet, then stand up. You can use your arms if you need to.
- Slowly return to the sitting position.
- If you use a walker or a walking frame, position it in front of you during the exercise.
- Repeat 10 times.



4. Elbow flexion

- Sit in a chair with your back straight and your arms at your side.
- Bend one elbow, keeping the palm of your hand facing up.
- Slowly return your elbow to the initial position; repeat 10 times with each elbow.



DAY 3

1. Mini-squat

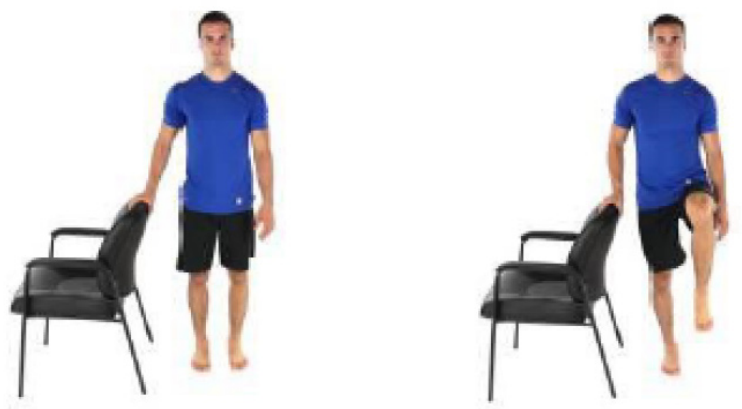
- Stand behind a chair or at a counter, supporting yourself lightly with your hands.
- Bend your knees as though you were about to sit down, then straighten up completely.
- Always keep your feet flat on the ground and your knees aligned with your feet.
- Repeat 10-15 times depending on your abilities.

Note: To increase the difficulty of this exercise, you can try to go lower.



2. Hip flexion

- Stand behind a chair or next to a counter.
- Place 1 or 2 hands on the chair or counter for support.
- Raise your knee as high as possible, keeping your back straight, then lower your leg slowly.
- Repeat 10-15 times per leg.



3. Side steps

- Stand facing a counter or a table, supporting yourself lightly with your hands.
- Side step to the right, then to the left.
- Repeat several times depending on your abilities.



Important!

If you experience any pain or discomfort during the exercises, contact your **health care professional** or **CLSC**.

4. Making a fist

- Sit in a chair, with your back leaning on the backrest.
- Squeeze a ball or a rolled-up towel tightly in your fist and hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10-15 times per hand.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Useful telephone numbers and sites to visit

Coronavirus information

- If you think you are infected
- If you are experiencing anxiety related to COVID-19

Info-aidant

Ligne Aide Abus Aîné

Notes

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References

- Tips and Advice for Seniors: Eating Healthy, Keeping to a Routine, and Staying Active during the COVID-19 Pandemic, CIUSSS de l'Estrie – Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke, 2020
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) : Directives pour prévenir le déconditionnement chez la personne âgée isolée dans son milieu de vie en contexte de pandémie, notamment en RPA, RI-RTF et CHSLD, gouvernement du Québec, 2020
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- Centre AvantÂge : www.centreavantage.ca
- Move 50+ : <https://move50plus.ca/>
- L'Appui : www.lappui.org/en

Our mission

To maintain, improve, and restore the health and well-being of the Québec population by making accessible an array of integrated and quality health and social services, while contributing to the social and economic development of Québec.

Our vision

Accessible and efficient health care and services that adapt to the needs of Québécois.

Our goals

The CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest achieves its goals through its innovative approaches and stands apart through:

- its exemplary offer of care and integrated services based on interdisciplinarity, accessibility, and adaptability to the needs of its population;
- its willingness to question and improve its professional, clinical, and administrative practices;
- its appreciation of its personnel and the implementation of human resource management practices;
- its strong relationships with its partners.

Our values

Our actions are guided by five equal and interconnected values: compassion, collaboration, commitment, confidence and consistency.