



Eating Well during Covid 19

Much debate surfaces on how to eat well during the current coronavirus pandemic.

Questions such as 'what should be eaten to boost the immune system through diet?' arise. To answer simply - you cannot "boost" your immune system through diet and no specific food or supplement will prevent you catching Covid-19. To date, the European Food Safety Authority have not authorised any claim for a food or food component to be labeled as protecting against infection. Good hygiene practices, coughing etiquette and social distancing remain the best ways of avoiding infection.

However a healthy balanced diet is encouraged in order to support immune function. One food over another is not recommended, instead, eating a variety of foods to ensure a balanced nutritional intake rich in vitamins and minerals, is essential.

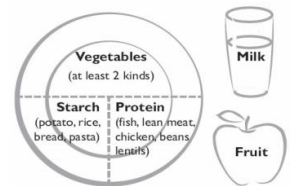
At St Michael's House the Dietitians acknowledge how difficult and challenging this time can be to provide healthy meals and snacks. Shopping is a task in itself. It is our intention to perhaps try and offer some ideas that we hope will be of help.

So what tools do you need?

Set up a routine



Routine is crucial to establishing and maintaining good eating habits. Try to keep meal times to the same time each day, and spread them evenly throughout the day. The goal should be to have three meals and two small snacks daily. If for example, breakfast happens to be mid morning then aim to have lunch 3 hours later etc.



Portion sizes

If the idea of focusing on what to eat is overwhelming, then perhaps focus on how much to serve at each main meal. At lunch and dinner, aim to serve at least one portion of vegetables, and fill half of the plate/bowl with vegetables.



What about snacks?

Save the higher calorie treats to certain times at the weekend. If 80% of the week's meals and snacks are healthy then there can be room to indulge at weekends. It's all about balance. Make an 'occasion' at weekends, set up 'Fakeaway Fridays'. Indulge in afternoon tea with homemade scones. The idea is to balance the times you have indulgent snacks with time when you have healthier snack choices.

It is important not to set unrealistic goals but equally to not develop bad habits around food that will be harder to break in the future.



Food Shopping / Meal Planning

Considerations when it comes to shopping:

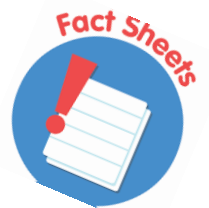
- Keep outings to a minimum.
- Consider online food shopping with delivery of food orders.
- Plan for the time it may take to do food shopping.
- Plan ahead and devise a menu plan for the full week.
- Aim to do shopping that will last the week.
- Write a list of what exactly is required for the week ahead.
- Avoid bulk buying fresh foods that can spoil easily.

Keep meal ideas simple, don't be afraid to double up on meals. For example a bolognaise sauce could be made up for two nights, one night have with pasta, next with mashed potato on top or as Lasagne.

Useful Resources for Service Users

<http://www.apictureofhealth.southwest.nhs.uk/healthy-life-styles/diet>

<http://www.fairadvice.org.uk/userfiles/Fair%20cookbook%20website.pdf>



Factsheets:

The Dietitians at St Michael's House have compiled different fact sheets on:

- Good habits-Bad habits
- Know your portions
- Healthy snack ideas
- Healthy snack ideas for people with swallowing difficulties
- Food & Mood
- One stop shop
- Meal plans

Useful Websites:

- www.fsai.ie
- www.indi.ie

