TIPS AND ADVICE FOR SENIORS

Eat Healthy, Stay Active, and Keep to a Routine during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Eating a healthy diet and staying active are essential for maintaining good health, especially among seniors.

The exceptional situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is changing many aspects of your life and may have a negative impact on your diet, your level of physical activity, and your mental and physical health.

This guide provides **tips and advice** on **diet**, **exercise**, and **daily routines** that, despite COVID-19, can help you to:

- MAINTAIN YOUR PHYSICAL STRENGTH
- REDUCE YOUR RISK OF FALLING
- MAINTAIN YOUR INDEPENDENCE.
- PROMOTE A HEALTHY IMMUNE SYSTEM
  to prevent disease and infection
- TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Québec

Possible impacts
OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Grocery shopping difficult or impossible	• Ask your child or a healthy relative, if available, to do your shopping. • Use the grocery services available by phone or on the Internet. • Buy more non-perishable food items to limit the number of times you need to shop.
Closure of your favourite restaurants **Modification of your usual services** *(e.g., Meals on Wheels)* **Decreased energy, tiredness**	• Opt for restaurants that offer delivery. • Use Meals on Wheels (hot or frozen meals). • Use catering services. • Opt for commercially prepared foods (fresh or frozen). • Have a supply of food or meals on hand that require little preparation.
Loss of appetite, anxiety, isolation during meals	• Eat foods that you like and are easy to prepare. • Put some colour on your plate: a beautiful dish is always more appetizing! • Focus on the pleasure of eating: listen to music; set a nice table. • Eat your three meals at regular times. • Seek help to reduce anxiety *(see contact information for resources on the last page of this document).*

Tips

for grocery shopping
over the phone

- **Look ahead:** don't wait until the last minute to place your order. Demand is currently very high and delays are longer than normal.
- **Give as many details as possible** to make sure you get the products you like. That way, you can avoid unpleasant surprises such as certain brands or formats being unavailable.

  For example, you might order like this:

  - *X-brand light tuna, tomato and onion flavour, 85 g size*
  - *Brand X liquid nutritional supplement, Plus Calories version, chocolate, 6 bottles*
- **Consult flyers or websites** *(ex.: iga.net, maxi.ca, metro.ca)* for more inspiration and information on the products you want to cook.
- **Ask for help from someone close** to you who knows your eating habits.

Ideas

simple
meals

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

Food

TO HAVE IN YOUR PANTRY

Room temperature	• Oatmeal, cream of wheat • Bananas • Onions, potatoes • Peanut butter • Rice (regular or seasoned quick rice) • Pasta • Bread • Nuts
Refrigerated	• Milk, yogurt, cheese • Eggs • Fruit and vegetables • Meat, poultry, fish
Canned foods	• Tuna, salmon, sardines, mackerel (plain or seasoned) • Sauce for pasta • 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 in servings • Prepared meals (with meat or more than 15 g of protein per serving) • Fish filets (plain or seasoned) • Reserve of bread, bagels, raisin bread, etc.

Protein:

a priority for every meal

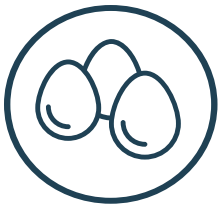
The body does not have large reserves of protein, which is why it is important to have protein in every meal, including breakfast. Protein is important for your muscles and your skeleton. Protein helps your body to better protect itself against falls and their consequences and to avoid sores.

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 for 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 turned over, scrambled, poached, boiled, or in an omelet.
- Hard-boiled eggs can be kept in the refrigerator for a week.
- At lunch and dinner, put at least two in your sandwiches or omelets.

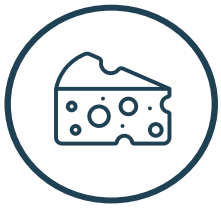
Yogurt

- Have 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.

Cheese



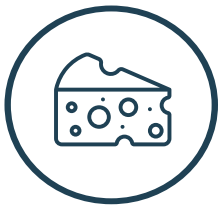
- Try different varieties such as cottage cheese, which is very high in protein and easy to chew.

LUNCH AND DINNER

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 the 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

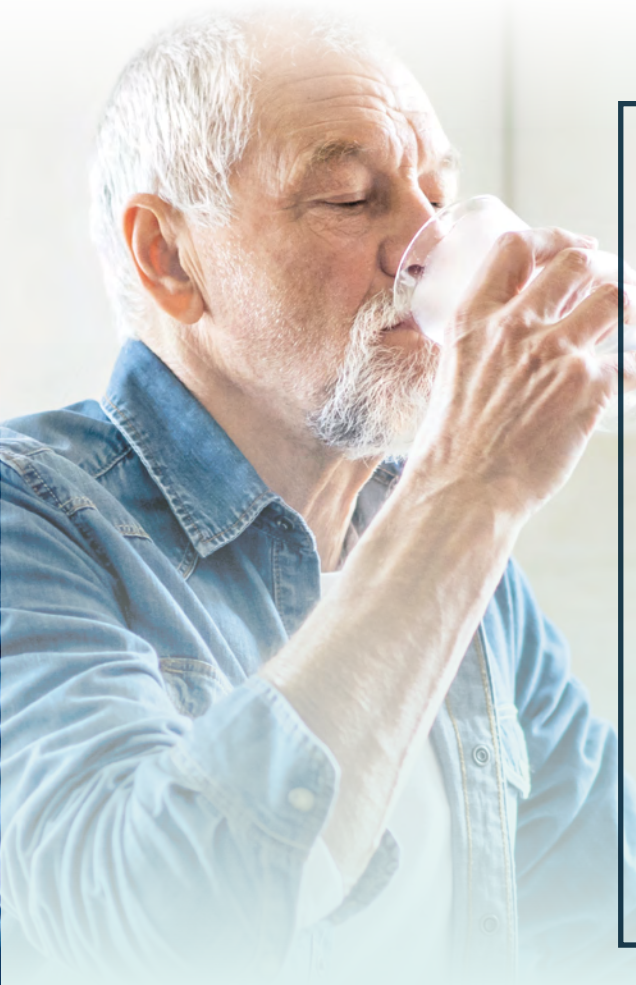
Cheese



- Have some on your vegetables and in your dishes.

Milk

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



REMEMBER TO DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS!

It is important to drink a minimum of 1.5 L of fluid per day, or **six 250 mL (1 cup) glasses**, or even more if you have a fever.

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

- Always have a glass within easy reach.
- Use more water than normal when taking your medicine.
- Set up a routine if you forget to drink *(e.g., 1 glassful at every meal and 1 glassful at 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m.).*

Are you at risk of malnutrition

Have you lost some weight in the past 6 months without trying to lose this weight ?

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.

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 dish 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 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 on the label, such as *Boost Plus Calories, Ensure Plus Calories*, or *Equate Plus Calories.*

Can the COVID-19 virus

be transmitted through food or food delivery?

The coronavirus **does not multiply in food**, whether local or imported.

COVID-19 infection can occur by touching a surface contaminated with the virus and then putting your hand to your face. This, however, is not the main mode of transmission.

REMEMBER:

- You **do not need to clean** all your purchases.
- **Rinse your fresh fruits and vegetables** before eating them. Washing with 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.).

Maintain a daily routine

to maintain your mental en physical health

- Go to bed and get up at regular times. Avoid taking long or many 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.
- Call family members, friends, or neighbours. Send them an email or regular letter.
- Determine people you can confide in if you need to.
- Take time to take care of yourself and treat yourself (listen to or play music, read a book, do puzzles, etc.).
- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Every day, engage in a meaningful activity that brings you joy and makes you feel good.

Exercising at Home

Inactivity can have a significant impact on your muscles and increases the risk of injury and sores. So you must stay active, even if it's inside your home:

- 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**.

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 AND EXTENSION

- Sit in a chair with your back straight.
- Fully extend the knee of one leg, then bend the knee back as far as possible.
- 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 to 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

- 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 in a straight parallel to the centre of your body. In other words, prevent it from moving outwards or inwards.*

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 touch the ground.
- Separate your feet to the width of your hips 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 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 facing hand up.
- Slowly return your elbow to the initial position; repeat 10 times with each elbow.

Contact your **CLSC** if you need help
or advice in implementing these actions.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Coronavirus Information

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

1-877-644-4545 or santeestrie.qc.ca

Info-Social

811, option 2

NOTES

Written by
Home-Care nutritionists, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists at the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS

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