

COVID-19 – Diet and Healthy Weight Key Messages

1. Introduction

It is recognised that there is an immediate need to provide credible, up to date information and advice around food, nutrition and healthy eating to support the Scottish public during the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). Public Health Scotland (PHS), in collaboration with stakeholders including Scottish Government and Food Standards Scotland have facilitated the development of a set of key diet related public health messages for the general population. These messages will focus on encouraging and enabling people to maintain good nutrition and eat as healthily as possible at this time.

Changes in people's food intake and eating habits during COVID-19 are highly likely as a result of self-quarantine/isolation; irregular access to food due to recommendations to limit trips to the shops; limited access to fresh produce; and disruptions in the food supply of certain other key items. For some, these may result in issues such as over consumption and even malnutrition. Food is a prerequisite for health and good nutrition is vital in maintaining strong immune systems and lowering the risks associated with chronic illnesses and infectious diseases. The World Health Organisation has published 'Food and nutrition tips during self-quarantine', however national and local partners and services are looking for a single point of truth, to which professionals or the public in Scotland can be directed towards for guidance.

2. Target audience

The impact on food intake and eating habits as a result of COVID-19 is likely to affect everyone, without exemption. Therefore, key messages will be targeted at the general population for maximum coverage and will be applicable to groups including:

- Individuals in self-isolation and/or working at home
- Families (including those with children) in self-isolation at home
- Individuals and families who may have limited access to food currently
- Those at risk from symptoms of COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions
- Professionals/services providing signposting advice

Specific groups not covered/targeted by the developed messages are individuals following special diets or information prescribed from a GP or other health professional.

3. Communication channels

Messages will be disseminated via existing communication and networking channels currently utilised by PHS in the first instance including:

- PHS Communications Team (including website, Twitter and Instagram)
- Other, internal PHS teams currently working with groups and/or individuals on the food agenda (e.g. Community Food and Health Scotland)
- Partner Communication Teams (where possible)
- NHS Inform
- Other local services/community connections
- Professional and voluntary networks with which PHS and partners currently work

Where alternative communication routes not listed above are required (such as to reach those unable to access digital channels) further discussion and solutions with stakeholders will be sought.

4. Measurement and evaluation

To demonstrate impact and reach of the proposed communications, PHS and partners will be asked to record and collate analytics through the following channels:

- Social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook)
- Web page analytics of content highlighted via these communications
- Email enquiries related to communications on healthy eating and COVID-19.

5. Key messages

Target audience:	Key message:	Descriptive message:	Signposting resources:
All	<p>Top line messages for framing:</p> <p>While we are living through the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to continue to eat well and stay active, during this time.</p> <p>Everything feels a bit different just now. Routines have been altered and our eating habits may have changed. However making a plan and being prepared can help us continue to eat well and stay active.</p>	<p>Overarching message:</p> <p>We are all having to make changes to the way we live as a result of COVID-19. It is important that we continue to eat well and stay physically active at this time.</p>	<p>https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19</p>

	<p>The extra time spent indoors at the moment is a good opportunity to try new foods or recipes or get other family members involved in preparing and cooking meals. This can be an enjoyable way to pass the time, try something new and, for some, learn a new skill.</p>		
<p>General population</p>	<p>Eat well</p> <p>Make a plan, feel prepared</p>	<p>Eating well and staying active is really important for both our physical and mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Eating a healthy, balanced diet which includes a variety of different foods will ensure you get all the essential nutrients and energy you need for throughout the day.</p> <p>To maintain social distancing and help stop the spread of Coronavirus we're being advised to stay at home just now, so time outside is</p>	<p>NHS – Eatwell Guide: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/</p> <p>NHS Inform – Eatwell Guide: https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/food-and-nutrition/eating-well/eatwell-guide-how-to-eat-a-healthy-balanced-diet</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Eatwell Everyday: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/healthy-eating/eatwell/eatwell-everyday</p>

		<p>limited. This means you may not be getting enough vitamin D from sunshine exposure. As it's difficult to get enough from food alone, you should consider taking a daily 10 microgram supplement of vitamin D. This is particularly important for people who are indoors all of the time.</p> <p>You may be experiencing a number of changes in the way you buy or get access to food right now, planning meals and snacks and writing a shopping list is a good way to make sure you get everything you need, but will also help limit your time at the shops.</p> <p>Supermarkets and other food shops have enough stock for everyone if we shop sensibly. Making sure that you only buy what you need helps avoid food going to waste and remember that you can often freeze leftovers for another meal.</p> <p>Food is an important part of our daily lives, not only for the energy that it provides us with but it's also something that many of us enjoy. For those of us who have more time on our hands right now trying new foods or recipes with ingredients that are readily available, or getting family members involved in preparing and cooking meals may be an enjoyable way to</p>	<p>Food Standards Scotland – Information on Vitamin D and sun exposure: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumer/s/healthy-eating/nutrition/vitamins-minerals/vitamin-d-during-isolation</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Food safety advice: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumer/s/food-safety/coronavirus</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Storing food safely: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumer/s/food-safety/at-home/storing-food</p> <p>World Health Organisation – Food and nutrition tips during self-quarantine: http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/food-and-nutrition-tips-during-self-quarantine</p>
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		pass the time, try something new and learn a new skill.	
General population	<p>Eat to feel fuller for longer</p> <p>Snack smart</p>	<p>Basing our meals around starchy foods such as pasta, rice and potatoes is a good way to keep us feeling fuller for longer.</p> <p>For many of us, our shopping routines have had to change. We may be buying food from different retailers and may need to change brands or buy items that are slightly different from our regular purchases. Where access to some varieties of certain foods might be limited right now, this may be a good time to try something new, for example mixing some whole grain pasta with your normal variety.</p> <p>Eating a variety of fruit, vegetables and pulses (such as beans and lentils) is not only good for your health, but is another good way to keep satisfied throughout the day.</p> <p>Soups can be a quick and easy lunch solution, be made with whatever vegetables and pulses you have available to you and be a good way to use up leftovers. Pulses including beans and lentils can also be a good substitute for meat and can be added to soups and stews to make them go a little further.</p>	<p>NHS Inform – Eatwell Guide: https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/food-and-nutrition/eating-well/eatwell-guide-how-to-eat-a-healthy-balanced-diet</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Eatwell Everyday: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/healthy-eating/eatwell/eatwell-everyday</p> <p>NHS - Eat well recipes: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/</p> <p>NHS - Change4life recipes: https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes</p> <p>World Health Organisation – Food and nutrition tips during self-quarantine: http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/food-and-nutrition-tips-during-self-quarantine</p> <p>ParentClub – Information on healthy snacking ideas: https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/all-you-need-know-about-snacking</p>

		<p>You may find yourself reaching for the fridge or cupboard to look for snacks more frequently at the moment, especially if you're feeling bored or stressed. Try having a variety of healthy snacks to hand such as chopped fruits and vegetables, breadsticks, rice cakes and crackers.</p> <p>It may be harder to get out to buy fresh fruit and vegetables right now but remember tinned or frozen fruit and vegetables are just as good.</p> <p>Like snacking, you might find that you may be drinking alcohol more often just now, particularly when you feel stressed. Try to be aware of how much you're drinking and when you do keep within the recommended limits of 14 units per week.</p>	<p>NHS Inform – Information on drinking alcohol sensibly: https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/alcohol</p> <p>NHS - Count 14 unit calculator: https://count14.scot/#unit-calculator</p>
General population	Stay hydrated	<p>Drinking plenty of fluid throughout the day (aiming for at least 6-8 glasses) will help keep your body hydrated.</p> <p>Sometimes it's easy to confuse hunger for thirst, so drinking often and throughout the day will help prevent this. Water from the tap is free and is a healthy choice for quenching your thirst at any time. It produces no waste, has no calories and contains no sugars that can</p>	<p>NHS Inform – Water and other drinks: https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/food-and-nutrition/eating-well/eatwell-guide-how-to-eat-a-healthy-balanced-diet#water-and-other-drinks</p>

		damage teeth. Having a water bottle close by that's used during the day is a good idea.	
Parents and carers with children and young people	Get in the kitchen together Enjoy family meals	<p>For children and young people, being indoors and not being able to socialise with their friends can lead to them being bored, often resulting in regular cries of 'I'm hungry'. Planning mealtimes and snacks together with children, as part of your daily routine could be one way to keep them busy, and help stop them heading for the cupboards.</p> <p>For younger children, ParentClub have a number of helpful suggestions on how to involve children in planning and making food. Making it fun and enjoyable will not only help pass the time but can encourage children to learn about food and cooking.</p> <p>For young people, this is a great time to let them loose in the kitchen and to develop the skills they need for the future. Asking them to plan and prepare healthy meals, finding new recipes for the family to enjoy or helping with shopping lists or online shopping will help them feel involved and can be a way to destress and keep them occupied.</p>	<p>Priority shopping hours: https://priorityshoppinghours.com/</p> <p>Parent Club – Eating well at home: https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/eating-well-at-home</p> <p>Parent Club – Staying at home with children: https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/staying-at-home-with-children</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Food safety advice: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/food-safety/coronavirus</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Healthy eating education and activities: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/education-resources</p> <p>NHS - Eat well recipes: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/</p> <p>NHS - Change4life recipes: https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes</p>

<p>Key workers</p>	<p>Rest, refuel and rehydrate</p>	<p>Try to take regular breaks, where possible, away from your workplace or caring responsibilities. Frequent shorter breaks are better for reducing fatigue and stress.</p> <p>Drinking water often throughout the day will help to keep you hydrated. This is especially important for people wearing PPE for long periods of time.</p> <p>Life can feel difficult at the moment but eating well and as healthily as you can, will help your body cope better with the demands placed on you during busy shifts. Focussing your meals and snacks around starchy food such as pasta, rice and potatoes and filling up on fruit and vegetables will help keep your energy levels maintained.</p> <p>Where possible, set aside some time to plan your meals and shopping to help you eat healthily when you are busy.</p>	<p>World Health Organisation – Food and nutrition tips during self-quarantine: http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/food-and-nutrition-tips-during-self-quarantine</p> <p>NHS Inform – Food and nutrition: https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/food-and-nutrition</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Eatwell Everyday: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/healthy-eating/eatwell/eatwell-everyday</p> <p>Priority shopping hours: https://priorityshoppinghours.com/</p>
<p>Shielded high risk clinically vulnerable group</p>		<p>For those of you who have been identified within the clinically vulnerable group, help is available to help you access food.</p>	<p>Priority shopping hours: https://priorityshoppinghours.com/</p> <p>NHS Inform – Information on shielding for the clinically vulnerable:</p>

		<p>If you have someone who can help shop or deliver food to you, making a list of the things you need will help them to shop swiftly and efficiently and limit the time they are at the shops. It might also be an idea to give them alternatives just in case what you would like is not available.</p> <p>There are also other services in place to support the shielded population. Basic grocery boxes can be ordered and are being distributed by two food distribution companies and Local Authorities via local resilience partnerships. A priority online delivery service has also been set up with a number of the major supermarkets for those that fall within the high clinical risk group.</p> <p>More information on this is available in the letter you received or through NHS Inform and via the SMS service.</p> <p>Vulnerable people can also contact their Local Authority via an established helpline to facilitate local access to food.</p> <p>Your local convenience stores and other retailers might also be offering a delivery service to help you get the items you need.</p>	<p>https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding</p>
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<p>Breastfeeding mums (including expectant mums considering their options)</p>		<p>This can be a worrying time for mums who are breastfeeding or those who are pregnant and considering their options. Breastfeeding supports your baby's immune system and protects them from many common illnesses and as there is currently no evidence that the virus can be transmitted through breast milk, you should continue to do so. If you have any concerns you should speak to your midwife, health visitor or GP.</p>	<p>Parent Club – Breastfeeding and coronavirus: https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/breastfeeding-and-coronavirus</p>

