

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 school closures; 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. The economic impact of COVID-19 on household income also means that some people will be operating within even greater financial constraints, thus affecting their ability to make or access healthy choices. 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.

The messages below should be interpreted and applied in a sensitive manner that recognises the situation which many individuals, families and communities currently find themselves in as a result of the effects of COVID-19.

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>NHS Inform – Coronavirus and Diet and Healthy Weight: https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/healthy-living/coronavirus-covid-19-diet-and-healthy-weight</p> <p>NHS Inform – Coronavirus and Physical Activity: https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/healthy-living/coronavirus-covid-19-physical-activity</p>

	<p>The extra time spent at home just now 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>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>It is important that we maintain sufficient levels of vitamin D. Since our main source of vitamin D is sunlight, this advice is especially important</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>for people who are indoors much or all of the time. Everyone (including children) should consider taking a daily 10 microgram supplement of vitamin D. It is specifically recommended that groups at higher risk of vitamin D deficiency take a supplement. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all pregnant and breastfeeding women • infants and children under 5 years old • people who have low or no exposure to the sun, for example those who cover their skin for cultural reasons, are housebound, confined indoors for long periods or live in an institution such as a care home • people from minority ethnic groups with dark skin such as those of African, African-Caribbean and South Asian origin, who require more sun exposure to make as much vitamin D. <p>Vitamin D supplements (including vitamin drops containing vitamin D for under 5s) can be purchased from most supermarkets and pharmacies. Please don't buy more than you need. If you're not able to get it, don't worry. Keep looking and take it as soon as you can.</p> <p>While it's difficult to get enough vitamin D from food alone, it can be found in foods such as</p>	<p>Food Standards Scotland – Information on Vitamin D and sun exposure: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumer/healthy-eating/nutrition/vitamins-minerals/vitamin-d-during-isolation</p> <p>Scottish Government – Information and advice on Vitamin D: https://www.gov.scot/publications/vitamin-d-advice-for-all-age-groups/</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Food safety advice: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumer/food-safety/coronavirus</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – Storing food safely: https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumer/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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	<p>Make a plan, feel prepared</p>	<p>oily fish and eggs. Some breakfast cereals, margarines and yoghurts are fortified with vitamin D.</p> <p>For many of us, shopping routines have changed and you may still be experiencing 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. You must wear a face covering when shopping as a precautionary measure to help stop the spread of Coronavirus.</p> <p>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>As lockdown restrictions are eased, you may find yourself looking for something different to eat or alternatives to cooking at home.</p> <p>If you choose to eat out or order a takeaway, try to avoid overdoing it and make healthier choices where possible. You could go for a lower fat topping on a pizza, such as vegetables; steamed or plain rice instead of</p>	<p>NHS – Healthier takeaways: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/healthier-takeaways/</p>
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		<p>fried rice; or a tomato or vegetable-based sauce, rather than cream-based.</p> <p>Planning to eat out or have a takeaway in advance can help you make better food choices during the rest of the week.</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. Using the extra time spent at home just now as an opportunity to try new foods or recipes, or get family members involved in preparing and cooking meals may be enjoyable ways to pass the time, try something new and learn a new skill.</p>	
General population	Eat to feel fuller for longer	<p>Eating breakfast will give you the energy you need for your morning activities and also help avoid unnecessary snacking. Cereals which are high in fibre and low in sugar are a good choice and are quick and easy to prepare. Add fruit to cereal for one of your five a day.</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>Eating a variety of fruit, vegetables and pulses (such as beans and lentils) is not only good for</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>Snack smart</p>	<p>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>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>Fruit and vegetables are usually cheaper if they're in season. If you can't get your hands on your usual fresh varieties right now, 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</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>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> <p>NHS Inform – Coronavirus and Alcohol: https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/healthy-living/coronavirus-covid-19-alcohol</p>
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		you do keep within the recommended limit of 14 units per week.	
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>Water, milk and sugar free drinks, including tea and coffee all count. Fruit juice and smoothies can be high in sugar so try to limit these to one small glass (around 150ml) each day.</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 damage teeth. Having a water bottle with you throughout the day is a good idea and can help you drink more water.</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>
Parents and carers with children and young people	Get together in the kitchen	<p>Having children and young people at home more can often lead to cries of 'I'm hungry' and having to come up with meal and snack ideas day-in, day-out can be difficult. But there are ways to help deal with this.</p>	<p>Parent Club – Eating well at home: https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/eating-well-at-home</p>

	<p>Enjoy family meals</p>	<p>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 and try new foods.</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>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</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>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>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/consumer/s/healthy-eating/eatwell/eatwell-everyday</p> <p>Priority shopping hours: https://priorityshoppinghours.com/</p>
Shielding group		<p>For those who have been shielding, you can now choose to visit supermarkets and shops. You will need to wear a face covering, unless you are exempt, and follow physical distancing advice.</p> <p>If you have been buying online, or having someone get the food and household items you need for you, you can carry on getting things in this way. Some retailers are still offering gift card schemes to allow others to shop for you.</p>	<p>Priority shopping hours: https://priorityshoppinghours.com/</p> <p>NHS Inform – Information on shielding for the clinically vulnerable: https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding</p>

		<p>Making a list of the things you need will help someone to shop swiftly and efficiently for you 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>If you'd rather get deliveries to your home, you can carry on getting priority access to online supermarket delivery slots after 1 August, providing you have already signed up for this service. This means you should still be able to book an online delivery slot even if it gets busy.</p> <p>More information on this is available in the letter you received, through NHS Inform and via the SMS service.</p> <p>Because you can buy the things you need either by going into shops or by ordering online, deliveries of weekly grocery boxes will stop when shielding is paused and it will no longer be possible to sign up for these.</p> <p>People who have been shielding can still contact their Local Authority directly or via the free national helpline on 0800 111 4000 for urgent support with food.</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>
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