

Eat well to feel well.

During times of stress and uncertainty, the most important thing we can do is to look after ourselves - both physically and mentally. Periods of social isolation present a great opportunity to improve your health, by doing all you can to eat well, sleep well and stay as active as possible.



Can I boost my immunity through food?

Unfortunately, there is no specific food or supplement that will protect you from germs or from catching a virus. Good hygiene practices and social distancing remain the best means of avoiding infection.

However, if we do catch a virus, our immune system is responsible for fighting it. Research does suggest that improving nutrition can help support optimal immune function, which is critical to help us stay healthy and feeling our best.

Essential nutrients and where to find them

The good news is that following common-sense dietary advice is enough to keep your immune system in good shape; no expensive supplements or difficult to source superfoods required.

While social distancing may impact upon our ability to access specific products, simply focusing on eating a variety of foods within each of the main food groups will boost your intake of key vitamins and minerals. Vitamin D is the only exception – as it is largely produced in the skin, in response to sun exposure. To ensure a healthy vitamin D status, adults and children over the age of one should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of Vitamin D if they struggle to get adequate sun exposure year round. Most people need just a few minutes outdoors most days.

The kitchen essentials listed below will help you incorporate the nutrients you need into your day-to-day diet.

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| Vitamin A Oily fish, egg yolks, cheese, tofu, nuts, seeds, beans, pulses and wholegrains | B Vitamins Meat, fish, dairy, nuts, fortified soya milk, breads & green leafy vegetables | Vitamin C Oranges, lemons, limes, berries, kiwi fruit, broccoli, tomatoes and peppers |
| Vitamin E Nuts, green leafy vegetables and vegetables oils | Iron Meat and fish, beans, pulses, legumes, wholegrains and dried fruits | Zinc Oysters and other seafood, meat, chicken, dried beans and nuts |

Things to limit

Sugar: It can be tempting to comfort yourself with sugary foods during times of stress, but regular consumption can lead to fluctuations in blood sugar levels that further increase sweet cravings and contribute to drops in mood and energy levels. Instead of sugary treats, try to opt for complex carbohydrates such as oatcakes with a banana or apple with peanut butter, for a more prolonged release of energy throughout the day. This will help support you to make better choices all day long.

Caffeine: Caffeine is a stimulant that inhibits our ability to recognise feelings of tiredness. High intakes can also heighten blood pressure and worsen both anxiety and insomnia. Alternate caffeinated drinks with caffeine-free alternatives such as squash, herbal teas, hot water with ginger or de-caff varieties to support your mental state and promote a good night's sleep.

Alcohol: Try to be conscious of your alcohol intake at this time. Alcohol can act as a depressant, which can exacerbate symptoms of poor mental health such as anxiety and lack of motivation. Excessive alcohol may also impair immune system function.

Whilst the occasional glass of wine in moderation is unlikely to have a lasting negative impact, be sure not to exceed 14 units per week, which is the equivalent of:

- 14 single measures of spirits
- 7 pints of lager
- 7 medium (175ml glasses of wine)

Advice
from expert
nutritionists.

All AIG Life customers have
access to the Smart Health Nutrition
Consultation service.

Consultations with expert nutritionists are available free of charge via phone or video call. During the call, you can ask the specialists any questions you have about nutrition and dietary habits. They'll provide you with a personalised plan, including meal plans and weekly menus, all to help and support you in reaching your nutritional goals.



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To book your consultation visit:
aiglife-smarthealth.com/en/nutrition-consultation

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