

# Loss of appetite and COVID-19

## What you need to know

### What is it?

In the weeks after having COVID-19, you may find that your senses of taste and smell have changed, which can cause a loss of appetite. This is normal. However, it's important that you eat and drink enough to recover properly..



### The importance of food and water<sup>1</sup>

Your body needs food and water to function; they keep you alive and give you most of your energy.

When your body is fighting off or recovering from an infection, it needs even more energy, so it's important that you eat and drink enough to help with the healing process.

### Strategies for a healthy diet<sup>1, 2</sup>

Drink 8-10 cups of liquid per day (e.g., water, herbal or regular tea, coffee, broth, soup, diluted fruit juice, milk, nutritional supplement).

Eat a variety of foods! That way, your body will get all the nutrients it needs to function properly.

### Eat high-protein foods at every meal:

- Nuts and seeds: sunflower, pumpkin, chia, flax
- Meat
- Soy: tofu, tempeh, edamame, textured vegetable protein, soy beverage
- Legumes
- Fish and seafood
- Eggs
- Nut butter: peanut, almond, hazelnut
- Dairy products: milk, cheese, yogurt

### Try to include wholegrain foods with every meal:

- Bread
- Pasta
- Rice
- Cereals: oats, barley, quinoa

### Try to include fruits and vegetables with every meal.

### Pay attention to your appetite

If you find you're eating less than usual, here are some ideas to stimulate your appetite or boost your nutrient intake.<sup>2</sup>

- Eat whatever you feel like eating;
- Choose foods with appealing textures;
- Make mealtimes enjoyable;
- Eat small meals more often (try to eat every 2-3 hours);
- Eat high-protein foods first at mealtimes;
- Eat high-protein, calorie-dense foods at every meal, and as snacks: nuts, cheese, Greek or full-fat yogurt, peanut butter, cream soups made with whole milk;
- Add gravy to meat, poultry, and side dishes;
- Eat high-protein, calorie-dense liquid foods, such as protein shakes (made with milk, yogurt, or tofu), soup, cream, nutritional supplements (e.g., Ensure<sup>®</sup>, Boost<sup>®</sup>).

### If you notice changes in your taste or smell:<sup>2</sup>

- Eat whatever tastes good to you; make a list of your favourite foods and eat them;
- Try new foods and beverages to find flavours you enjoy;
- Start with bland foods, then add flavour (e.g., sugar, salt, herbs or spices);
- Start with cold foods, as the flavours of hot foods can be more intense;
- If you have dry mouth, suck on a sour candy or a mint, or chew gum before or after meals;
- Brush your teeth regularly.

### If you have a metallic taste in your mouth:<sup>3</sup>

- Use plastic utensils or chopsticks instead of metal;
- Use glass baking dishes instead of metal;
- Eat fresh, homemade foods instead of canned;
- If you find that meat has a metallic taste:
  - Add meat to casseroles or stews to lessen the taste;
  - Eat leftover meat cold;
  - Try eating nuts, baked beans, peanut butter, cheese, or eggs instead;
  - Mix meat with apple or cranberry sauce;
  - Marinate meat with lemon juice, Italian dressing, vinegar, barbecue or teriyaki sauce.

### If certain smells bother you:<sup>3</sup>

- Eat your food cold or warm (avoid heating);
- Eat foods that don't need to be cooked (e.g., sandwiches, cereal, cheese and crackers);
- Use the stove fan or crack the window, put lids on saucepans, or use the microwave or barbecue to lessen cooking smells;
- Ask your family for help with cooking or eat prepared meals.

### References:

1. Homerton University Hospital. (Mars 2021). Post Covid-19 patient information pack. [www.homerton.nhs.uk/download/doc/docm93jjim4n6743.pdf?amp;ver=13452](http://www.homerton.nhs.uk/download/doc/docm93jjim4n6743.pdf?amp;ver=13452)
2. Société canadienne de nutrition. (Mars 2021). COVID-19 and Nutrition. [nutritioncareincanada.ca/sites/default/uploads/files/COVID-19/Food\\_is\\_Medicine\\_2\\_Covid-19\\_and\\_Hospitalization\\_French\(1\).pdf](http://nutritioncareincanada.ca/sites/default/uploads/files/COVID-19/Food_is_Medicine_2_Covid-19_and_Hospitalization_French(1).pdf)
3. Alberta Health Services. (Mars 2021). Eating well when you have taste and smell changes. [www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-eating-well-when-you-have-taste-and-smell-changes.pdf](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-eating-well-when-you-have-taste-and-smell-changes.pdf)

If you need more help or support, don't hesitate to talk to your doctor or a dietitian.

If you have questions about long COVID, please email us at: [readaptation.covid.cisssmo16@ssss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:readaptation.covid.cisssmo16@ssss.gouv.qc.ca).

#### Our mission

To maintain, improve, and restore the health and well-being of the Québec population by making accessible an array of integrated and quality health and social services, while contributing to the social and economic development of Québec.

#### Our vision

Accessible and efficient health care and services that adapt to the needs of Québécois.

#### Our goals

The CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest achieves its goals through its innovative approaches and stands apart through:

- its exemplary offer of care and integrated services based on interdisciplinarity, accessibility, and adaptability to the needs of its population;
- its willingness to question and improve its professional, clinical, and administrative practices;
- its appreciation of its personnel and the implementation of human resource management practices;
- its strong relationships with its partners.

#### Our values

Our actions are guided by five equal and interconnected values: compassion, collaboration, commitment, confidence and consistency.