

# Staying Safe at Home

Diet and Nutrition in  
the age of Coronavirus



# Add some protein to every meal

Protein foods provide the backbone to our immune system, are often rich in other key nutrients and eating enough of this nutrient group will help preserve muscle mass and strength, especially in conjunction to exercises.

In Guernsey we are blessed by our own eggs, milk and dairy products, and wonderful fish and shellfish rich in protein, omega 3 fish oils and zinc. Adding nuts to your daily routine protects our hearts and immune systems. Beanjar is the ultimate in slow food and high in protein, iron and fibre. Casseroles including some meat, pulses and vegetables providing highly nourishing easy to digest food which can be a great gift for a relative forced to stay at home.

Finally remember lots of alternative milks are very low in protein, so not necessarily healthier than our Guernsey milk. Try low lactose milk if you find too much milk affects your tummy, but most of us in Guernsey should be fine and cows' milk can be an excellent booster when we have a poor appetite because of feeling under the weather.

# Take vitamin D3 supplements in winter

Many people I see are low in vitamin D3 at this time of year, after a wet and windy winter with low levels of sunlight the sunshine vitamin is always in short supply, so get your levels checked or top up with an OTC supplement at least 10ug, ideally with Vitamin K2 alongside for maximum efficacy. Vitamin D protects bone strength and also immune function. When we all worked outside all year, we had large reserves, and people who still spend a lot of time outside will not have a problem. However, those most of us working inside are at risk, and especially the elderly and pregnant women.



# Don't forget your Vitamin C

We know that even frozen vegetables are rich sources of folate and vitamin C - but did you know that potatoes often provide a very significant amount of vitamin C in peoples' diets? Blackcurrants and blackberries are rich sources of vitamin C, fibre and phytonutrients, even in jam! Tomatoes in all types of sauces and juices provide vitamin C plus lycopene, frozen peas provide folate, vitamin C and fibre, Onions and garlic boost the ability of the body to fight off colds, as does ginger. Chillies and peppers again protect us and are rich sources of vitamins. Storecupboard meals should still contain lots of these rich boosters for the immune system, and can be even topped up by foraging nettles for soups, and other goodies in wild patches of the garden (take care for exact identification, but try Alexander, Penny pies (Pennywort), and blanched dandelion leaves!). Growing rocket is a great activity for children and promises a rapid supply of vitamin C, folate and iron rich food. Remember, a curry with turmeric, black pepper, cumin - just use a curry paste - is another great booster to the immune system and also a mood booster!

## Power your immune system with fibre

I spend a lot of time chatting to people about their gastrointestinal system, and not many people realise we need to be having about 30 g fibre a day. Store cupboard or ready meals may need a fibre boost, try adding beans or pulses to readymade dishes, have beans on toast as a snack meal, and add nuts or seeds to dishes to increase their tastiness but also their fibre content. Brown rice is delicious once you get used to cooking it that little bit longer than the white version, porridge oats make amazing energy bars with nuts and dried fruit which are so much more nutritious than plain cake.

Although "gluten free" food is fashionable, the only people who need to avoid gluten are those with a diagnosis of Coeliac Disease or a known gluten sensitivity. Gluten free products are often lower in fibre and lower in protein than wholegrain products and swapping to a gluten free bread when it is not needed may be unhelpful. There is no evidence gluten free diets help the immune system.

Fibre in the colon is fermented down by your microbiome to make short chain fatty acids such as butyrate, these chemicals then boost your immune system. Having enough fibre not only makes the tummy more comfortable, it also keeps you safe. Add in live yoghurts, try making your own if you can't get to the shops regularly, or have options such as Yakult or Activia to keep your bowel healthy. And always drink enough to keep hydrated, at least 6 good drinks of water or other sugar free drinks a day.

# Meal Ideas: Breakfast

Eggs bought in Guernsey are safe and useful ways to increase your protein intake, and make a perfect breakfast, try French toast otherwise known as "eggy bread", poached eggs on a bed of spinach from the garden, or the classic boiled egg and soldiers.

Porridge is another easy store cupboard food, made even more nutritious by fortification with 4 spoons of skimmed milk powder mixed into every pint of milk when you make it from traditional rolled oats. Overnight oats are made by soaking rolled oats overnight in juice or milk and adding in flaked almonds or dried fruit as required. Muesli and all other wholegrain cereals can be made more exciting by adding yoghurt, handfuls of nuts, frozen berries and chopped fruit.

# Meal Ideas: Light Meals

The perfect food in my mind is a homemade vegetable soup or a beanjar. Pulses like lentils and butter beans add iron, fibre and protein alongside satisfying protein. Sardines on toast or homemade kedgeree with frozen smoked fish and eggs all are simple delights, add a raw carrot or handful of leaves for extra nutrition. Wholemeal toast with peanut butter and a piece of fruit is another simple but nourishing snack.

Add baked beans to everything and anything to improve nutrition as they are high in fibre, vitamin C and lycopene and readily enjoyed! The traditional potato, vegetable and protein of the Guernsey diet is nourishing and ideal for keeping you going.

## ... and Finally

Make sure you don't lose weight unintentionally and keep safe through these difficult times. For more advice, follow the link to the COVID-19 advice from the British Dietetic Association

[https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/covid-19-corona-virus-advice-for-the-general-public.html?dm\\_i=1M7S,6SBG0,NU0AOZ,R5IL9,1](https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/covid-19-corona-virus-advice-for-the-general-public.html?dm_i=1M7S,6SBG0,NU0AOZ,R5IL9,1)

