

5 tips for grocery shopping during COVID-19

Source: [Telus Health](#)

Keeping our bodies and minds well fueled with nutritious foods remains as important as ever during these challenging times. When it comes to grocery shopping, aim to minimize your trips to the store and make the process less stressful by having a solid game plan in place.

Stay safe while grocery shopping by visiting the store when it is less busy, and maintain a two-metre distance between you and other shoppers. Wash your hands with soap and warm water before, and after you grocery shop, and avoid touching items when unnecessary. If you are sick, please refrain from going to the store. Instead, have someone pick up your grocery items for you and drop them at your door.

Here are five tips to help you make the most out of your next grocery shop.

1. Meal plan rather than stockpile

Stockpiling without a plan could mean that you end up with items that don't work well together and meals that may not give you a good balance of nutrients. Ultimately stocking up without a plan can result in both food waste, and a hole in your wallet. If you have been meaning to work on those meal planning skills, now is the perfect time!

Aim to put together a plan for two weeks. First, make an inventory. Take a look at what you already have in the fridge and pantry, and make sure to check the best before dates. Make a list of your favourite healthy meals and plan for meals to yield a few extra portions to use as lunch leftovers or to store in the freezer. Get your family involved too! Have everyone contribute a meal idea. Need some more recipes?

2. Get the store to lend a hand

To help promote physical distancing, use grocery delivery or click and collect services where available. Some stores have these services available, however, they are in high demand at the moment. Make sure to call your local store or check their websites to see what services they can offer at this time. Meal box services are also good options.

3. It's not all about the canned food aisle

Make sure to purchase a mix of fresh and frozen foods along with pantry items. Make sure to include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, dairy foods and other protein-rich foods on your list. Not all fresh foods, in particular fruits and vegetables, will keep for more than a week or so. Luckily, there are some options with longer shelf lives. Options for fresh produce that have longer shelf lives are listed under tip #4.

4. Purchase foods that support a healthy immune system

Some key nutrients involved in maintaining a healthy immune system include vitamins A, C, D, E, B, iron, selenium and zinc and, of course, protein. Foods rich in these nutrients include fruits, vegetables, pulses, meat, chicken, fish, nuts, seeds and whole grains.

Fruits and vegetables:

In addition to your favourites, consider fruits and vegetables with longer shelf lives. Frozen fruits and vegetables, and canned vegetables and fruits (in water) are good options. Fresh fruits and vegetables with longer shelf lives include: beets, carrots, parsnips, turnips, sweet potatoes, cabbage, garlic, onions, apples, melons, oranges and grapefruit. Challenge yourself to include fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack. Consider starting your day with a smoothie or smoothie bowl to fit in plenty of nutrients first thing in the morning!

Protein:

Aim to include protein-rich foods for all meals and snacks. Animal-based proteins like beef, pork, poultry, and fish are options, but so are nuts, nut butters, beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, eggs, canned fish and frozen seafood. If you are less familiar with cooking beans/chickpeas and lentils, Pulse Canada has a great [cookbook](#) you can access online. Beans and lentils can be a quick and easy protein for salads, tacos and pasta sauces. From the frozen section, consider picking up a bag of edamame beans and a bag of frozen shrimp, two great frozen protein options.

Dairy:

Greek yogurt is another great protein-rich food. If possible, choose plain, lower fat options. All yogurt will have some sugar, and that's okay, there is some naturally occurring lactose. Dairy alternatives like almond milk and ultra filtered milks (Fairlife or Joyya) have longer shelf lives than regular milk if you are worried about your milk going bad.

Grain products:

Aim to choose whole grain options as they offer more nutrients than their refined counterparts (even the enriched refined counterparts). Some options to consider for your list are: steel cut oats, wild and brown rice mixes, quinoa, whole wheat pasta, whole grain wraps or pitas, whole wheat rotini, high-fibre cold cereals (Kashi, All Bran), high-fibre crackers (Ryvita Crunch, Wasa) and hemp hearts.

Fluids:

There is no need to switch over to drinking bottled water at this time. Good old tap water is just fine! Make sure to stay well hydrated throughout the day. Your typical routine might be thrown off, meaning habits like drinking water between meals might be off course too. Try using a large water bottle to help you keep track of your water intake. If you need a little variety, other good

options to stay hydrated include herbal tea or flavoured soda water like Bubly, Nestle Pure Life, PC Blue Menu sparkling water, Perrier, etc.

5. Choosing wisely when selecting pre-made meals

If you're not feeling up to cooking and plan to stock up on some frozen meals, look for options that are lower in sodium and saturated fat. Brands with meals that fit these guidelines include: Mann's Frozen Meals, Healthy Choice, Luvu and PC Blue Menu. Consider choosing seafood, poultry and bean-based meals over red meat meals. Choose higher fibre and whole grain options, avoiding cheesy, fried or curry meals. Additionally, aim for the lowest sodium option you can find. Depending on your area, there may also be options in your community to have healthy, fresh, pre-made meals delivered to your home.

Together, we can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 through effective social distancing and hand washing. In our homes, we can cook and eat delicious and nutritious meals that ensure that we remain well nourished.