

## Working Well from Home

As we all find ourselves spending more hours than we could ever have imagined in the sanctuary of our own homes, this is the perfect time to focus on good food to nourish our bodies, minds and souls.

Working from home has its challenges – not least trying to stay out of the fridge when you know there are some tasty treats in there, but with a little bit of planning and some creative ideas, this could be the ideal opportunity to make some positive changes.

This is not a time for dieting, cutting back or food restrictions. Instead, with more time on our hands, this new routine of social distancing and self-isolation can provide us with a unique opportunity to eat more healthily and keep ourselves well-nourished.

### Your working day

**Set a healthy new daily routine to help keep you focussed as you work from home.**

- Get up at your usual time. Try replacing your daily commute with a new habit of morning exercise. Stretching, yoga or a walk are a great way to start the day so by the time you get to your desk your head will be clear and you will feel ready to start your working day.
- Don't stay in your PJs all day! After your morning exercise, get showered and dressed.
- Set your schedule. Keep to the same working hours as you would if you were going out to work. Otherwise work is more likely to spill over into your rest and relaxation home time.
- Make a list of what you need to do. Some people like to do this the night before, for others it works better first thing in the morning.
- Get away from your desk regularly. Work in 30 minute blocks. Research has also found that short breaks throughout the day are more beneficial than less frequent, longer breaks.
- Set yourself time for a mid-morning tea break, lunch and afternoon break. Get away from your desk, phone a friend or colleague, or go and make yourself a cup of tea.
- Get outside. Fresh air will help clear your head and can help to reduce fatigue and stress.
- Clear your workstation away and declutter your desk at the end of the day.
- Make a list of what you need to achieve tomorrow.
- Do something to signify the end of your working day. Make yourself a cuppa, change your clothes or join an online class.



# Vital Nutrition

## Keeping Healthy with Good Nutrition

It can be easy to slip into the routine of grabbing quick snacks and junk food as a treat when confined to your home office, so being prepared and stocking up with healthy food is the key to eating well when you are working from home.

### Plan ahead

We are being advised to food shop once a week only, so this will take some careful planning.

Use my 7-day menu planner to work out what you are going to eat over the next seven days, then use this to make your shopping list.

Check what you already have in your fridge and cupboard and plan your meals around this – for example if you have a can of chickpeas and some tinned tomatoes, then chickpea curry could be on the menu.

You can print out the planner and shopping list to help with your planning.

That way you will not buy stuff you are not going to eat, and you will have all the ingredients you need for the recipes you are planning without unnecessarily having to nip out to get food.

### Try new recipes

Don't just cook the same old things as normal. Embrace the opportunity to try some new ideas. Dust off your recipe books or check out some more recipes online or ask family and friends to share their favourite dishes. Then get into the kitchen, stick some tunes on and get creative.

### Stock Up (but don't overbuy!)

Buy healthy ingredients to stock up your cupboards for the week so that you can throw together something quick and easy for lunches.

Be careful not to buy too much. There is enough food for everyone if we are careful and don't stockpile food we are not going to eat.

### Here are some hot tips to help keep you healthy:

- Eggs can make a quick lunchtime omelette or be added to brown rice and veg for a healthy egg-fried rice.
- Tinned fish can be used to fill wholemeal pittas (which can be frozen and popped straight into the toaster) at lunchtime or with made into fishcakes for dinner.
- Wholegrains like wholemeal pasta and brown rice are a lot more nutritious and filling than the white versions.
- Buy fresh and frozen vegetables – keep an eye out for veg that can be used for stir-fries, roasting or steamed.
- Make a big batch of roasted Mediterranean vegetables – have some with fish and potatoes for dinner, and eat the rest cold as a salad with feta for lunch tomorrow.
- Get creative in the kitchen.



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## Make meal prep part of your new daily routine

Use your cooking time as a chance to switch off from what's going on in the world outside. Switch off the news and put on a podcast or music instead. Make your kitchen your sanctuary.

A wee disco dance around the kitchen always makes us feel better, doesn't it (or is that just me)?!

## Keep your mealtimes regular

For most of us, our working day has changed beyond recognition, so sticking with regular mealtimes is one way to maintain a daily routine. For some people stress and anxiety can result in a lack of appetite, so sticking to set mealtimes makes it easy to remember to eat. Skipping meals can trigger the stress hormone adrenaline, and we have enough of that coursing through our bodies right now without adding to it, so please do not skip meals. Breakfast, lunch and dinner with a snack or two will help keep a routine in your day and keep you well nourished.

## Make your mealtimes an event

With cafes and restaurants closed, it's time to transform your kitchen into the best little restaurant around – even if it's just spaghetti bolognese for tea! Clear the clutter from your kitchen table, pick a flower from the garden and put it in a vase on the table, and maybe even iron that tablecloth stuck in the back of a cupboard somewhere. Make your dining space a nice place to be. Eating when we feel relaxed helps aid digestion and means we are more likely to absorb as many nutrients as possible from the food we eat.

Sit at a table to eat your food. Don't be tempted to slouch in front of the TV. If the weather is nice enough, why not eat lunch outside. You'll come back to your desk feeling clearer and brighter.



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## Don't Eat at Your Desk

Get away from your desk at breaktimes. You will come back feeling refreshed and more energised. Don't snack at your desk – mindless munching makes us feel crap.

Make your snacks count – you can really up the ante with your nutritional intake by choosing some healthy snacks. A healthy snack mid-morning and/or mid-afternoon can give you a wee hit of healthy nutrition to help fuel your energy levels and keep you motivated.

## Here are some ideas:

- Olives
- 2 oatcakes with sugar-free nut butter
- A handful of nuts
- A piece of fruit
- Yoghurt & fruit
- [Carrot sticks and super food houmous](#)
- Chopped apple with sugar-free peanut butter
- 70-85% cocoa chocolate with a few brazil nuts

Check out some herbal teas to keep you hydrated on your teabreak.

If you drink coffee, less is more. Too much caffeine can leave us feeling stressed, anxious and jittery. Stick to one or two cups of good quality coffee a day, sit back, relax and enjoy it.

Share your food with family and friends (especially if you live alone!)

How about arranging a virtual coffee break or lunch date with the people you love by video messaging. Then sit down at your respective tables and catch up over a cuppa or some good food.

## Get kids into the kitchen

Cooking is an essential life skill, and this is the perfect opportunity to get the kids into the kitchen. If you have tweens, or teens, why not set a family cooking challenge. Get them to choose their recipe and have a family cook-off!

## Grow something you can eat

Use the extra time we have to grow something – it's a good idea start with salad leaves. They grow really quickly, you can just pick what you need and they taste so much better (and are a lot healthier) than the bagged salads we get in the supermarket.



## Ideas for your Menu Planner

### Breakfast ideas

- [Overnight oats](#)
- Low sugar granola with natural yoghurt, berries and extra seeds
- Porridge with nuts and seeds
- Eggs – boiled, poached or scrambled with wholegrain toast, sourdough or rye bread
- Natural yoghurt with berries, nuts and seeds

### Lunch ideas

Keep your fridge packed with quick and handy lunch items to keep you well fuelled and nourished for your afternoon.

- Wholemeal pitta pockets packed with salad and leftover chicken, tinned fish or houmous
- Colourful seasonal salads with eggs, fish, chicken, houmous or pulses, served with oatcakes or sourdough bread.
- [Quinoa super salad](#)
- Houmous with falafels, chopped raw vegetable crudites and some oatcakes
- [Homemade soup](#) with oatcakes and cheese
- An open sandwich (less of the bread, more of the filling = a healthier lunch)

### 'Fridge raid' omelette

#### Ingredients:

Whatever you can find in the fridge (maybe half a pepper, some leftover potatoes, some onion, a couple of mushrooms, some spinach or broccoli, the end of a block of cheddar or some goat's cheese)

3 eggs

Herbs – fresh or dried and any combination of what's available (parsley, rosemary, thyme, oregano, dried mixed herbs)

Some olive oil

#### Method:

Chop all the vegetables you have found.

Whisk the eggs in a bowl and season with salt and pepper.

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan.

Add the potatoes and onion if you have them and cook for a few minutes until they start to turn golden brown.

Add the other vegetables and cook for 1-2 minutes to soften.

Stir in the herbs.

Pour the egg mixture over the top and allow to cook until the egg starts to set.

Add the cheese and finish off under the grill.

Serve with a salad if you have it, or on its own.



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## Dinner ideas

### Cook once, eat twice.

The best midweek meals are those that you can cook in bulk and transform the leftovers into something completely different with very little effort.

That leftover Bolognese becomes shepherd's pie, chilli with rice for tea tonight becomes the base for tomorrow's fajitas, or leftover roasted Mediterranean veg from tonight's dinner is transformed into lunch for tomorrow, maybe with leftover chicken, some grilled halloumi, or houmous, popped into a wholemeal pitta pockets

**Discover new recipes and pack in as many vegetables as you can. Include some form of protein (egg meat, fish, chicken, pulses, etc.) and a slow release carbohydrate for a healthy, balanced meal.**

- Stir fry with prawns, loads of veg and wholemeal or buckwheat noodles
- Fish with roasted veg and new potatoes
- Spag bol with wholemeal pasta
- Chilli with brown rice
- Wholemeal fajitas with chicken/beef, veg and salad

## Lamb Tagine

### Ingredients:

300g diced lamb  
1 tblsp harissa paste  
1 dsp olive oil  
1 onion, chopped  
2 sticks celery, chopped  
2 carrots, chopped  
1 cinnamon stick  
2 cloves garlic  
1 tsp turmeric  
70g pitted olives  
1 tin chickpeas  
a handful of prunes or apricots  
1 lemon  
250ml beef or lamb stock  
generous handful flat leaf parsley



### Method:

Preheat the oven to 160C/320F/Gas 3.

Mix the harissa paste with the lamb and set aside while you prepare the rest of the tagine. If you have time, it is good to marinate the lamb in the harissa paste overnight in the fridge.

With a vegetable peeler, remove and save the rind of the lemon. Quarter the peeled lemon.

Heat the oil in a casserole dish or tagine on the hob. Brown the marinated lamb and then add the onion, celery, carrot, cinnamon, garlic, turmeric, olives, chickpeas, dried fruit and lemon rind. Place the quartered lemon into the pot. Add the stock, put the lid on the pot and transfer to the oven.

Cook for about 2 hours until the lamb is very tender. Just before serving, top with parsley. Delicious on its own or served with quinoa, brown rice or a crisp green salad.

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## 7-day Menu Planner

Use this menu planner at the start of the week (or a Sunday evening is a good time), to get organised and plan what you are going to eat for the week ahead.

- Make extra portions to use the next day where you can, to make healthy eating as simple as possible.
- Take a look at what you have in your cupboards, fridge and freezer and use these foods for inspiration (and to reduce food waste, and unnecessary expense).
- Try some simple new recipes – look online for inspiration, or take a look at *The Vital Nutrition Cookbook* for ideas.

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACK
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				

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## Your Shopping List

Once you have created your 7-day menu plan for next week, it's time to make a shopping list.

1. Have your menu plan handy so you can see what you are going to need
2. Check what ingredients you already have in your fridge, cupboards and larder
3. Make your list – this makes online shopping really easy!



Fruit & Vegetables

Meat & fish

Dairy

Sauces

Tinned stuff

Bulk foods

Bread & bakery

Freezer foods

other







## Stay at home to stop coronavirus spreading

The current government advice (as of 23rd March 2020) is to stay at home even if you are well, only going outside for food, health reasons or essential work, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people and wash your hands as soon as you get home.

- Stay at home if you are unwell.
- Regular handwashing – Hand washing is a really simple yet highly effective strategy that everyone can do. Hand washing is especially important before eating or touching any part of your face. General advice is to wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 30 seconds.
- Hand sanitiser gel – When you don't have access to hand washing facilities use an ethanol-based hand sanitiser gel with at least 60% ethanol content. Avoid touching any part of your face (especially eyes, nose, mouth) with unwashed hands.
- Practice cough / sneeze etiquette – Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then dispose of it immediately. If you don't have a tissue, cough into the sleeve of your inner elbow rather than your hand.
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell.
- Wipe as you go – Regularly wipe down frequently touched objects and surfaces in your home.

For full guidance please click on the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

You will also find more information in these Vital Nutrition blogs:

<https://vital-nutrition.co.uk/coronavirus-wellbeing/>

<https://vital-nutrition.co.uk/coronavirus/>