



FIRE FIGHTER
nutrition

Eat for Health.
Eat for Life.
Eat for Real.

Eating Healthy During COVID-19

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is affecting every aspect of our lives. Exercise, good nutrition and stress management are all critical for fire fighters and emergency medical personnel to stay well and continue to help in this current situation.

Healthy eating is especially important for keeping your immune system in top condition. With a little thought and planning, you can continue to make good food choices and possibly even boost your mood and immunity. Here are a few tips to help you eat smart during this unprecedented time.

Be strategic about the use of ingredients.

Purchasing and storing fresh fruits and vegetables can be challenging right now, but it is important to include them in each meal when possible. Use fresh ingredients and foods that have a shorter shelf life first. Frozen fruits and vegetables can be conveniently used over longer periods and have a similar nutrient profile. Get creative with what is available at the station or at home — adding vegetables to ingredients can increase the nutrient profile of any meal. Canned vegetables do tend to contain lower quantities of vitamins than fresh produce, but they are a good fallback option when fresh or frozen foods are hard to come by.

Stay Hydrated.

Make sure you drink enough water — it's one of the easiest ways to take care of yourself. Your immune cells are much more resilient when you are well hydrated. Whether on the job or at home, set a reminder on your phone and keep a water bottle with you to remind yourself to drink throughout the day. Also, drinking water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages is a simple way to limit your sugar intake and avoid excess calories.

Make cooking and eating a fun and meaningful part of your routine.

Cooking and eating together both on shift and at home is a great way to create healthy routines, strengthen bonds and have fun. Use ingredients that are already in the kitchen. Be creative and get the crew involved (or your family when at home). If there are leftovers, store them in the freezer for later in the week. Breaking bread together is a great way to check-in with everyone and help reduce stress during uncertain times.

Limit highly processed foods.

While whole, real food is optimal — using fresh produce may not always be possible. However, try to limit the amount of highly processed foods at the station and at home. Ready-to-eat meals, packaged snacks and desserts are often high in sugar, salt and saturated fats. If you do purchase processed foods, look at the label and choose healthier options containing less of these substances.

Practice portion control.

It is very easy to overestimate portion sizes or overeat when feeling stressed, anxious or bored. Slow down and pay close attention to the way you and your body feel before, during and after a meal or snack. Have healthy snacks available, eat off smaller plates and don't eat straight from the container to prevent overeating. Find more tricks and tips for better portion control [here](#).

For more information on healthy eating, go to the [IAFF Fire Fighter Nutrition resource page](#). See more **tips** from the World Health Organization on healthy eating during self-quarantine.

