Nutrition and Hydration: Quick Facts for COVID-19 Patients

Background

In the US, only around 12% of those infected with COVID-19 will require hospitalization.[1] The remaining 88% are people who will manage their illness and recover at home.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 infection are fever, cough, and shortness of breath; these symptoms are usually accompanied by fatigue and loss of appetite.[2]

Nutrition and Hydration are Central to Recovery

With an infection, the body must work intensely to mount an immune response. High fever is the immune system's way of revving up metabolism to "battle the bug." Fever is also associated with excess loss of fluids and increased metabolism which can lead to dehydration and increased nutritional requirements.

Even though you may not be thirsty or hungry, it is important that you continue to eat and drink fluids to support your body's ability to fight the virus and support your body's immune function.

Protein and calories are important to protect against muscle loss while fighting COVID-19, especially if you are bedridden or inactive.

For more information, visit nutritioncare.org/COVID19.

References

1. Razzaghi H, The CDC COVID-19 Response Team. Severe outcomes among patients with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) — United States, February 12–March 16, 2020. 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2020;69:343-346.

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) symptoms of coronavirus. 2020. April 6, 2020.

Meeting the Nutritional Needs of a Person with COVID-19

Nutritional Requirements:

- Fluid: about 3 quarts (3 liters) of fluid per day
- Calories: 2000 – 2500 calories per day
- Protein: 75 – 100 grams per day

Drink Fluids Every Hour

At a minimum, you should drink 2–4 ounces of fluid every 15 minutes. The optimal fluids to drink are clear liquid beverages with calories and protein, oral rehydration solutions, or sport drinks.

Eat a High Calorie, High Protein Diet

- Try eating 6 times a day, every 2–3 hours. Eat even if you are not hungry.
- Calories are important to protect against breakdown of muscle for energy. Due to the increased stress from COVID-19, you need more calories than your normal diet.
- Try to eat 75–100 grams of protein per day which is 10–14 ounces of a protein source. Good protein sources are: peanut or nut butters, milk, eggs, yogurt, cheese, meat/fish/poultry, protein shakes.
- Due to decreased appetite, now is not the time to restrict calories. Eat nutrient dense foods. Drink fruit juice, milk, or other calorie-containing beverages.
- Double or triple the portion sizes of added fats and oils (butter, margarine, cream cheese, sour cream, and avocado).
- Try using liquid nutritional supplements (available in grocery stores and drug stores) between meals to increase your nutritional intake.
- Eat small amounts frequently.

Food is medicine when you are ill.

aspen | LEADING THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF CLINICAL NUTRITION
American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition