

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Regarding COVID-19 and Food Safety and Nutrition

The following thorough and beneficial information on food safety and nutrition is provided by Dr. Joe Domitrovich, Exercise Physiologist, and his team at the U.S. Forest Service National Technology and Development Program (NTDP).

1. Food Safety

Is COVID-19 spread through food or food packaging?

- Currently there is no evidence of food OR food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging.
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. Person-to-person spread is most likely to occur with close contact (within about six feet). COVID-19 is spread via respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Whether a person can get COVID-19 by touching a contaminated surface or object is unknown.

References

- <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#How-COVID-19-Spreads>

Will the food supply on incidents be safe?

- In general, the food supply in the United States is among the safest in the world.
- Anyone handling, preparing, and serving food on incidents will follow normal safe food handling practices in addition to FDA guidance and best practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as:
 - Pre-screen (e.g., take temperature and assess symptoms prior to starting work).
 - Disinfect and clean work spaces and equipment and consider more frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces.
 - Regularly self-monitor (e.g., take temperature and assess [symptoms of coronavirus](#)).
 - Wear a mask or face covering.
 - Practice social distancing and stay at least six feet from other people whenever possible.

References

- <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/best-practices-retail-food-stores-restaurants-and-food-pick-up-delivery-services-during-covid-19>
- <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

What are general safety precautions I can take when handling or consuming food on incidents?

- Avoid all in-person contact or stay at least six feet away from personnel outside your resource when picking up or resupplying with food and water.
- Before preparing or eating food, always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Again, there is no evidence of food packaging being associated with the transmission of COVID-19. However, if you wish, you can wipe down product packaging and allow it to air dry as an extra precaution.
- Be sure to clean and properly store any cooking equipment, utensils, and dishes between uses.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold by storing in appropriate transport vessels (insulated food containers or coolers with ice).
 - Without proper refrigeration, do not keep and consume prepared meals as leftovers the following day.
 - Consume hot food in clamshells/to-go containers within two hours of serving by caterer to reduce risk of foodborne illness.

Reference

- <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/shopping-food-during-covid-19-pandemic-information-consumers>

Guidance for store stops

- If you have a large crew, designate 1-2 crew purchasers to shop for the entire crew. Gather a list ahead of time.
- Avoid shopping during hours that may be reserved for high-risk groups. If possible, shop during hours when fewer people will be there (e.g., early morning or late night).
- Follow all store instructions for safe shopping (e.g., one-way aisles).
- Wear a face covering or mask while inside a store.
- Wipe down the handles of the shopping cart or basket.
- Wash your hands or use a hand sanitizer prior to shopping and after completing the shopping trip.
- Stay at least six feet away from others while shopping and standing in lines.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth and avoid touching items that you do not purchase.
- If possible, use a touchless payment (pay without touching money or a keypad). If you must handle money, a card, or use a keypad, use hand sanitizer right after paying.
- After leaving the store, use hand sanitizer. When possible, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Again, there is no evidence of food packaging being associated with the transmission of COVID-19. However, if you wish, you can wipe down product packaging and allow it to air dry as an extra precaution.

References

- <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/shopping-food-during-covid-19-pandemic-information-consumers>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html>

2. Nutrition

The following short- and long-term goals were used to guide changes to feeding options with COVID-19 considered.

Short-term health goals

Safety—Safe food sourcing, preparation technique, and storage is crucial.

Adequate calories—Adequate calories are essential for maintaining cognitive function.

Macronutrient distribution—Proper ratios of macronutrients are critical for optimal performance.

Long-term health goals

Adequate calories—Adequate calories promote the maintenance of immune function, muscle mass, and body weight.

Balanced nutrition—Nutrient dense options are important for providing adequate nutrients and promoting overall health.

Variety—Food variety is important for ensuring nutrient adequacy, accommodating various dietary restrictions, as well as maintaining morale.

Fiber—Adequate fiber (access to fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) aids in stability of blood sugar, proper gastrointestinal function, and availability of nutrients.

How do I know I am still getting adequate nutrition?

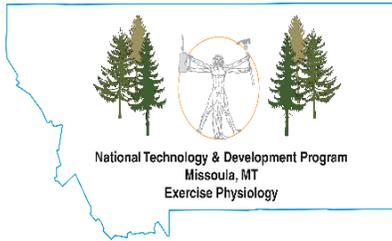
The team at the National Technology and Development Program Exercise Physiology department (NTDP) have created specifications for all three feeding options that align with the following nutrition considerations:

- From the large food contract rationale document:
 - Average total daily caloric demand = **4,351 ± 966 calories/24 hours**
 - Range of total daily caloric demand = **2,700 to 6,300 calories/24 hours**
- It is widely recognized in athletic and military training/operational environments that dietary intake should be about:
 - **50-70% carbohydrate**
 - **10-30% protein**
 - **20-35% fat**

What are some steps I can take regarding nutrition that will help me stay healthy and support immune function?

- The healthier you are, the better your immune system.
 - Adequate sleep, physical activity, proper hydration and nutrition all play a role in immunity.
- Your immune system protects you from infectious substances in the environment, including bacteria and viruses. Evidence indicates that intense training and exhaustive activities cause immunosuppression and can increase the risk of infectious disease of the upper respiratory tract. (Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness.)
- Key factors that may affect the tactical athletes immune system:
 - Delayed eating—Focus on small portions throughout the day rather than large meals. Stable blood glucose (sugar) benefits the immune system.
 - Inadequate caloric consumption—Caloric deficit, particularly for consecutive days, can significantly strain the body's immune function.
 - Nutrient intake—Consume nutrient dense options and a variety of foods when possible.
 - Carbohydrate emphasis—At least half of your calories should come from carbohydrates.
 - Protein dispersion—Adequate protein consumption supports the immune system. Space protein consumption out throughout the day for better absorption. (American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.)
- Fortify your personal squirrel stash to include some items that may get you through “in a pinch.”
 - Adequate calories and timing—Items like packets of jerky, tuna fish, nuts, dried fruit, granola and protein bars, single-serve nut butters and protein powder, crackers, and other shelf stable goods will help you “bridge” between meals when traveling or throughout the shift.
 - Nutrient intake—When cooler or storage space permits, additional sources of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are recommended.
 - Basic nutrient needs can be met through a balanced diet. Supplements can benefit you if there is a deficiency, and the supplement consumed specifically targets that nutrient.

- If you feel your diet is lacking overall, start with a generic multivitamin specific to your age and gender. There is no need to spend a fortune; just make sure it has a “USP-verified” seal.



This RLS was submitted by:
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<https://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/ntdp/program/fire-aviation-management/physiology-and-nutrition>

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