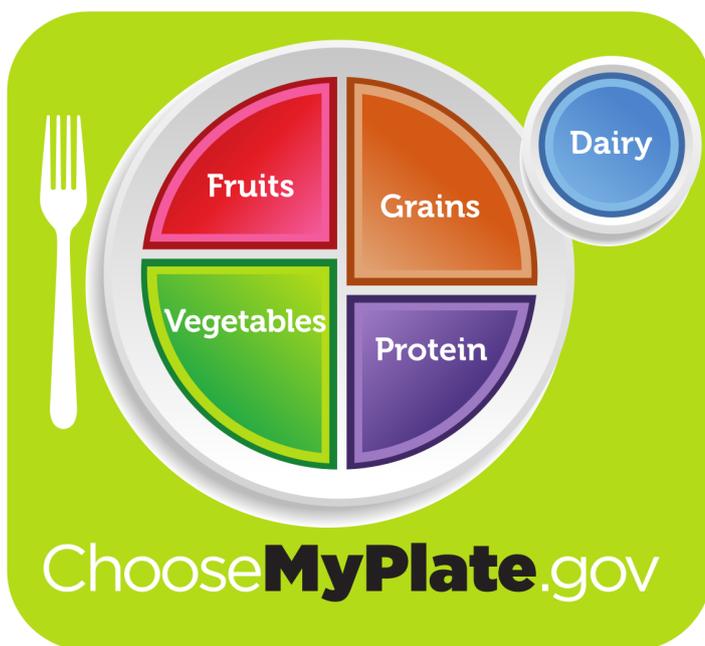


# EATING BALANCED HEALTHY MEALS

DURING COVID-19



## Vegetables

1. Buy frozen when in stock.
  - a. Look for plain vegetables without sauces.
2. Freeze fresh veggies!
  - a. Buy fresh vegetables, and prep and store them in the freezer.
3. Go for canned!
  - a. Look for labels that read "no salt added" or "reduced sodium" to skip the sodium and salt.
  - b. If you can't find low salt versions, rinse the sodium off by placing the canned veggies in a colander or strainer and rinse them under cool water.

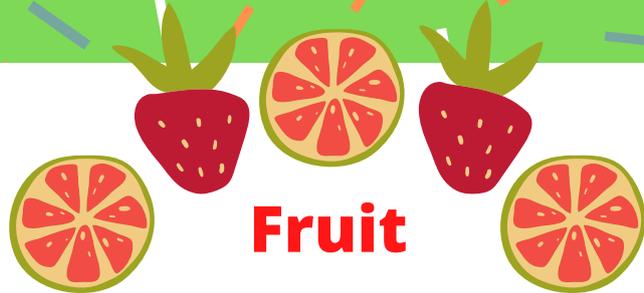
## Stocking Up

Healthy eating starts with getting a mix of the 5 different food groups each day.

This MyPlate image is an easy way to remember to include a variety of foods in your meals. However, it can be hard to eat balanced when you don't have everything you need in your kitchen!

COVID-19 has made it harder to get the groceries you need, but it's still possible to stock up and eat well. Here are some tips for buying and storing foods from each food group to continue making balanced, delicious meals at home!





## Fruit

1. Try frozen fruit.
  - a. Frozen fruit is great in smoothies and yogurt.
2. Freeze fresh fruit!
  - a. Berries, bananas, peaches, mangos, pineapple, and grapes freeze well, just to name a few!
3. Stock up on canned.
  - a. Look for phrases like "no added sugar," "unsweetened," or "in 100% juice" to skip the added sugar.
4. Try dried fruit.
  - a. It lasts a long time in your pantry. Check the label to make sure there is no added sugar.
5. Juice it up!
  - a. Fruit juice is a good alternative, though it doesn't have fiber. Limit fruit juice to 1 serving of 4-6 oz per day and look for labels that say "100% fruit juice" or "no added sugar."

## From Fresh to Frozen

1. Wash with running water and dry the fruit or veggie with a clean towel.
2. Chop it how you'll want to use it later.
3. Place in freezer-safe bags or containers.
4. If you need to defrost before use, place in refrigerator the night before.



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## How to freeze bread:

- For store-bought bread, keep it in its original bag, then put in a freezer-safe bag.
- If you plan to use it as slices, slice the bread before freezing.
- Pull out individual slices and warm them in the toaster.
- To defrost whole loaves, place in the refrigerator overnight or put a frozen loaf on a baking sheet in the oven and warm at 375F for about 20 minutes.

## Grains

Grains typically have a long shelf-life, especially in their uncooked forms, like raw rice, oats, and popcorn kernels. Remember to look for grains marked as "whole grain" or "whole wheat" for the best nutrition benefits.

Some cheap and easy whole grain staples:

**brown rice and oatmeal.**



Brown rice is full of nutrients and fiber to help keep you full. If you want to shorten the cooking time, try parboiled brown rice.

Look for oatmeal marked plain or lower sugar.

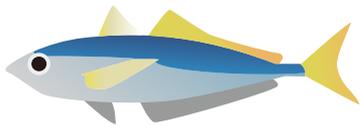
## Protein

During the pandemic, some grocery stores have had a limited supply of typical protein staples like ground beef and chicken breast. However, there are many more good sources of protein that you can add to your meal planning!

### *Other sources of protein:*

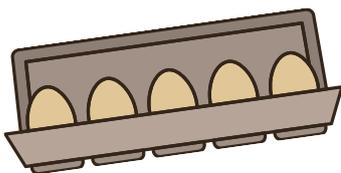
- **Beans**

- Beans are a great source of cheap protein! You can find them dried or canned, and they pair great with soups, stews, and rice dishes.



- **Fish**

- Some types of fish like salmon and tuna have heart-healthy fats. Look for specials in the seafood section or get canned fish.
- If buying canned, look for "in water" on the label.

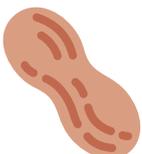


- **Eggs**

- Eggs are another good source of protein, vitamins, and minerals.
- Eggs can be frozen out of the shell and defrosted in the fridge overnight or the day before.
- Note: don't freeze eggs in the shell!

- **Nuts and nut butters**

- Nuts are a good source of healthy fats and protein. Look for unsalted nuts for the most health benefit.



## Dairy



Unopened milk, yogurt, and cheese have a long shelf life.

The "**Best By**" label tells you when the product is at its best quality, but they are often safe to eat after the date if they've been stored properly. Milk and yogurt can last up to a week past the "Best By" date. Use your senses: if it looks or smells off, pitch it!

*For more information on these tips and other ideas for eating healthy during COVID-19, check out the following resources.*



Ellis, Esther. "Are Canned Foods Nutritious for My Family?" at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

Ellis, Esther. "Frozen Foods: Convenient and Nutritious" at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

Klemm, Sarah. "Getting Groceries During Quarantine" at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

Klemm, Sarah. "Freezing 101" at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

Cooking Matters: Tips & Videos at [cookingmatters.org](http://cookingmatters.org)

Resources for Families at [nokidhungrync.org/families/](http://nokidhungrync.org/families/)



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