

GROCERY SHOPPING DURING COVID-19

Shopping during COVID-19 can seem overwhelming. With changes in supply, stay-at-home orders, and store hours, shopping trips may not always seem successful. Here are some general tips to help you with your next in-person shopping trip.

1. **Practice social distancing.**¹ Disinfect. Use contact-free payment if possible.
2. **Make a grocery list** ahead of time.² Grocery lists can help keep you on track and make meal planning easier.
3. **Avoid hoarding** or "panic buy." Hoarding prevents others in your community from accessing food. It can also lead to more food waste.³
4. **Choose more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables** to help support immune health.

Limit fried foods, frozen dinners, and baked goods.

Buy these foods sparingly, as these foods have little nutritional value.



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Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants and fiber. Antioxidants support the immune system. Fiber can help with digestive health. Here are some tips when choosing fresh, frozen, or canned produce.



Fresh

Fresh produce is an excellent option if consumed within the next few days or weeks.⁴

- Shop for **in-season produce**. In-season products are usually cheaper.
- Store fresh fruits and vegetables properly to prevent early spoilage and food waste.
- Store bananas, stone fruit, citrus fruit, and tomatoes on the countertop, away from sunlight to maintain freshness longer.
- Store watermelon, potatoes, garlic, and hard squash in a dark, cool pantry.
- Store all other fresh fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator. Store **within 2 hours** after purchasing.⁵
- **Rinse** produce properly before meal preparation or consumption.⁴

Frozen

Frozen produce contains plenty of nutrients. It is picked at its ripest moment and frozen immediately. This process protects the vitamins and minerals found in fresh produce.⁴

- If you are trying to reduce your number of grocery visits and have a freezer, frozen is a great option.
- Frozen produce can last in the freezer for several months when stored properly. The FDA recommends freezers always to be **0° F (-18° C)**.⁵
- Choose **plain** frozen fruits and vegetables. This means no extra sugar or sodium was added.

Canned

Canned fruits and vegetables last the longest and do not require refrigeration.⁴ This makes them a good option when refrigerator storage is limited.

- Choose canned fruit that is in **100% fruit juice or water** to watch added sugar intake.⁴ Select canned vegetables low in salt. Look for **reduced-sodium** or **very low sodium** on labels.
- **Drain and rinse** canned products before using them. Read the **expiration date** correctly. Do not use canned products after the *expiration date*.⁵

Pantry Staples

During these times, pantry products may be a practical way to reduce grocery visits and reduce spoilage. Pantry products include dried pasta, cereals, dried rice, dried beans, nuts and seeds, and canned items. Here are some tips based on the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

- Try **100% whole wheat** or **whole-grain** pasta to add more fiber to your meals.
- Many breakfast cereals contain high amounts of added sugars. Look for **whole grain** options instead.
- Try **old fashioned, rolled, or steel-cut oats** for oatmeal. These include less added sugars than instant oatmeal.⁷
- Look for nuts and seed mixes low in sodium. Choose **unsalted** options whenever possible.
- Store pantry products in a **cool, dry place** for freshness.



Sources: Food and Drug Administration

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Running Essential Errands. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html>. Accessed July 25, 2020.

² Klemm S. Getting Groceries During Quarantine. EatRight.org. <https://www.eatright.org/food/planning-and-prep/smart-shopping/getting-groceries-during-quarantine>. Published February 29, 2020. Accessed July 25, 2020.

³ Royte E. Food waste and food insecurity rising amid coronavirus panic. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/03/food-waste-insecurity-rising-amid-coronavirus-panic/>. Published March 31, 2020. Accessed July 25, 2020.

⁴ American Heart Association. Fresh, Frozen or Canned Fruits and Vegetables: All Can Be Healthy Choices! www.heart.org. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/add-color/fresh-frozen-or-canned-fruits-and-vegetables-all-can-be-healthy-choices>. Accessed July 25, 2020.

⁵ Office of the Commissioner. Are You Storing Food Safely? U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/are-you-storing-food-safely#:~:text=Keep the refrigerator temperature at,temperatures and are generally inexpensive>. Accessed July 25, 2020.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015 – 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

⁷ Cording J. Looking to Reduce Your Family's Intake of Added Sugars? Here's How. EatRight. <https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/dietary-guidelines-and-myplate/looking-to-reduce-your-familys-added-sugar-intake-heres-how#:~:text=Common Sources of Added Sugars&text=Sugary cereal,as cakes, pastries and cookies>. Published July 31, 2018. Accessed July 25, 2020.