

What to eat when you have COVID—and why reaching for the chicken soup is not a bad idea

April 27 2023, by Lauren Ball and Julie Marsh



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Got COVID? Again? Deciding what to eat can be mentally taxing, especially when you are not feeling well. However, our diet plays a role in preventing and managing poor health, including COVID.

Having a [healthy diet](#) is associated with a [reduced risk of COVID](#). And, if you do have COVID, a healthy diet is associated with [milder symptoms](#).

What should I eat during COVID infection?

When we are sick it can be challenging to even think about food. However, the best way to fight the infection is by providing your body with foods that best support you to [heal](#).

Fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains and various forms of protein are broken down into substances by the body to support your immune system.

[The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating](#) suggests we eat a variety of fresh foods every day including:

- two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables
- whole grains, such as wholemeal pasta, brown rice or wholemeal bread
- healthy fats, such as avocado or olive oil
- meat and meat alternatives (such as lean beef, [chicken](#), tofu or legumes) and dairy (such as cheese or milk).

Eating these kinds of foods every day helps provide our body with the nutrients required to fight infections and remain healthy.

[Avoiding processed and ultra processed foods](#) is also encouraged due to the high levels of salt and sugar and lack of nutrition found in these types of foods.

What about chicken soup or similar?

A great way to get all the nutrition your body requires when sick with COVID is through homemade [chicken soup](#), chicken avgolemono, chicken congee or other similar dishes.

Why? Here are four good reasons:

1. It's easy and cheap to make

The great thing about chicken [soup](#) is you can pop it in one pan (or into a slow cooker), throw all the ingredients in together and let it simmer away.

While the ingredients in chicken soup pack a powerful nutritional punch, they don't cost the Earth.

2. It's easy to absorb

The boiling process releases the [nutritional elements](#) found in the ingredients and aids in digestion and absorption of these vital nutrients.

3. It's full of vitamins and minerals

[Essential vitamins and minerals](#) found in chicken soup include: iron, magnesium, sodium, potassium, calcium, chromium, copper, zinc, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin B6 and vitamin B12.

4. It's flavoursome and powerful

The tasty flavour of chicken soup is enhanced by the [seventeen different amino acids](#) found in chicken soup. These amino acids also provide strength for your [immune system](#)

Nutrition can support immune health but it's not the only answer

The best way to treat and manage a COVID infection is to avoid it in the first place. So remember to practise good hygiene, like washing your hands regularly, and maintain your recommended [vaccine schedule](#).

Practising a [healthy lifestyle](#) will also reduce your risks of not only contracting COVID, but also developing chronic disease. This includes not smoking or vaping, maintaining healthy physical activity habits, getting enough sleep and reducing [alcohol consumption](#).

The current [recommendation](#) for maximum alcohol intake is ten [standard drinks](#) in one week, and no more than four standard drinks in one day.

Don't forget to drink plenty of water

Water is [crucial](#) when you're sick.

Being dehydrated can enhance symptoms of colds and infections, including COVID. It is also associated with a higher risk of developing [long COVID](#).

Aim to drink at least two litres of water per day, even more if you have a high body weight or have been losing fluids through vomiting or sneezing/runny nose.

If you don't feel like having plain water, there are many healthy alternatives such as tea, broth or soup.

Let's remember to eat healthy anyway

Eating a healthy and balanced diet is an important part of maintain good health and vitality.

Getting caught up in fads or buying supplements can be expensive and there is controversy around their effectiveness.

In the long run, eating healthy will make you feel better and save you money.

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