

During the current circumstances surrounding COVID-19, students may have questions about food and food safety.

### **What do I need to know when I go grocery shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

We are being asked to maintain physical distance and to stay home as much as possible. For these reasons, there are a few things to consider when grocery shopping:

- Plan ahead – use this [helpful meal planning tool](#) to help you choose nutritious, cost-effective and easy-to-prepare meals for one week.
- Once you have an idea of what to buy for the week - make a grocery list. Try categorizing the list in order of your local grocery store's layout (ex. Produce section, then Bread/Bakery section, then Dairy/cooler section, etc.) to make shopping as quick and easy as possible. Or consider making use of an on-line Order & Pick Up or delivery grocery service if you can. Try to buy everything you might need for at least one week – this way you will not have to go out as often.
- Give yourself plenty of time to do your grocery shopping. Maintaining physical distance between yourself and other shoppers/store employees often means some extra time spent in line-ups. Be patient, and respect that everyone is doing their best under the circumstances.
- Be flexible – if you cannot find the product you are looking for, consider if you really need it this week, or find an acceptable substitution. Opting for canned and frozen varieties may be a good option, and tend to last much longer than fresh food items.
- Wash or sanitize your hands before and after grocery shopping.

### **Do I need to be worried about buying or eating raw fruits and vegetables?**

No, there is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread through eating or touching raw fruits or vegetables. As would be suggested under normal circumstances, wash or scrub fresh produce under cool, running tap water prior to consumption.

### **After grocery shopping, should I be concerned about storing foods in my cupboard, fridge, or freezer?**

Dietitians of Canada recommends washing your hands after putting away food you have purchased and before preparing food, practices that are a good idea at any time. There are no special precautions needed when storing food, other than the usual food safety habits like keeping things clean, keeping foods at a safe temperature, and separating raw from cooked foods.

After grocery shopping, if you choose to wipe down food containers, wash your hands before you start and again after you have finished.

Visit [Peel Public Health](#) for more detailed information on food safety at home.

## **I don't have enough money to buy the food I need right now – where can I get help?**

The Food Centre on campus is currently closed. However, there are many food banks and services that provide food for no cost within Mississauga (Peel Region) and in the Greater Toronto Area. Because hours of operation and services may change rapidly, it is best to select a location close to you, and then call to find out whether they are open during this time, and what they can help you with.

If you live close to UTM, start here:

<https://www.peelregion.ca/planning-maps/foodprograms/foodprograms.html>

If you live in or around Toronto, start here:

<https://www.torontocentralhealthline.ca/listservices.aspx?id=10572>

## **Is there anything I need to take or to eat to improve my immune system?**

A healthy diet rich in fruit and vegetables, protein foods and whole grains is important for a strong immune system as are other healthy lifestyle habits (e.g. exercise, not smoking, adequate sleep, and managing stress).

There are many nutrients that are involved with the normal functioning of the immune system and therefore it is a time to eat a variety of nutrient-rich, healthy foods each day in order to support immune function. A special “cleanse” or other diet restrictions are not recommended and can actually weaken your defenses.

Steer clear of “immune-boosting” supplements and other products that claim to prevent, treat or cure COVID-19. There is no single food, supplement or natural health product that will prevent you from catching COVID-19. To date, the Government of Canada has not approved any product to prevent, treat or cure COVID-19.

Recommendations of public health officials to wash hands often and thoroughly and to practice physical distancing are the best ways to prevent COVID-19.

Reference:

<https://www.dietitians.ca/News/2020/Advice-for-the-general-public-about-COVID-19>