

Kai & nutrition for optimal health

Get your good food fix! Good nutrition is crucial for optimal health, particularly in times when the immune system might need to fight back.

Whatever your food preferences, it's important that you eat a healthy and balanced diet. Now is not the time to seek comfort in junk food, high-sugar and processed foods.

While we're on heightened COVID-19 alert, it's a good idea to stock up on a two week supply of food and essentials in case you are required to stay home in quarantine or isolation. To help you plan ahead, here are some practical pointers from Te Marae Ora to boost your immunity and look after yourself through healthy eating.

Eat natural unprocessed foods. Buy locally grown and in-season foods or grow your own. Natural food is packed with nutrients. Eating fruit and vegetables every day does not guarantee you won't get sick but it puts the body in a stronger position to fight infections and other nasties.

Stock up on canned and frozen foods when fresh produce is hard to come by. These can be stored and used over longer periods of time and are great for an emergency food stash.

Add green vegetables, turmeric, garlic, onion and ginger to your meals. Great local options are rukau, rukau viti - also known as bele or Fijian rukau, moringa, green papaw, pinapi and spinach. Replace rice or noodles with sweet potato (kumara), arrowroot (maniota), and taro - in small portions.

"Everything we eat is either helping or hurting our health."

Best food buys for your cupboard, fridge and freezer include:

- **Cupboard:** tinned chicken, salmon, sardines, tuna, mackerel, green beans, mushrooms, spinach and coconut cream, jars of gherkins, natural nut butters and olives, broth, protein powder, whole milk powder, nuts, and flavourings like dried herbs, spices, vinegars and mustard.
- **Fridge:** vegetables like cabbage, pinapi, broccoli, onions, carrots and root crops, fruit such as fresh papaw, passionfruit, oranges and bananas, cheese, including cream cheese, cottage cheese and hard cheeses, cold cuts of meat, eggs, cream and fresh coconut cream (moina tai), nut milks like almond, coconut and cashew, sour cream, salsa, unsweetened yoghurt, whole meat sausages (not pre-cooked), bacon and butter.
- **Freezer:** mince, seafood, sausages, bacon, berries, vegetables, chicken, pork, steak

Soups, stews and green smoothies can be a great

way to boost nutrients in a person who is unwell, lacking appetite or strength. Use a broth as your base for your meals. Drinking bone, fish or vegetable broth a couple of times a day is a great natural way to boost vitamins and minerals.

Include fermented food in your daily diet such as noni juice, kombucha, apple cider vinegar, low-sugar probiotic yoghurt or take a probiotic supplement. Our guts naturally have good bacteria that supports and strengthens our immune system. By adding food that contains these good bacteria you help build up your defences from the inside.

Get some sun. Vitamin D is mostly made from sunlight absorbed through the skin and is vital for a healthy immune system. Fifteen minutes of casual sun exposure every other day is generally sufficient to achieve required vitamin D levels.

Stay hydrated. Make water your main drink of choice.

Sleep on it! Prioritise good quality sleep.

Aim for 7-9 hours sleep each night. It's a time of rest and repair for the body which helps boost immunity.

Remember everything we eat is either helping or hurting our health. During this time let's all make good choices.

