



Serving Up Happy & Healthy at Home

These are truly extraordinary times as we continue to shelter at home to keep our families safe and do our part to fight the spread of the Coronavirus. It's an especially stressful and anxious time for families trying to juggle home schooling, managing the household and for some, working from home.

For many of us, our initial reaction to stress and anxiety is to make a beeline for foods that contain salt, fat and sugar that satisfy us emotionally. You know the culprits calling us from the pantry—chips, pretzels, cookies—you name it. These choices seem to calm our nerves in the short run but to no one's surprise, this pattern of eating can make us feel worse. A steady diet of these foods can mess with our blood sugar and cause our emotions to become more erratic and actually increase our stress and anxiety.

Below are some simple guidelines from Harvard Medical School which you can follow to help you feel your best and control your anxiety during these challenging times.

- Participate in the school food program in your community to receive free nutritious meals for your children.
- Avoid processed foods which tend to be higher in salt, fat, and sugar.
- Enjoy an occasional comfort food.
- Avoid or limit alcohol and caffeine.
- Stay hydrated.
- Focus on fruits and vegetables in particular because they are rich in antioxidants which may ease the symptoms of anxiety as well as whole grains, lean meat and low fat dairy.
- Incorporate these specific foods into your family meals which can reduce stress and boost immunity:
 - Citrus fruit, strawberries and broccoli—all great sources of Vitamin C
 - Complex carbohydrates such as whole grain bread, brown rice, and oatmeal which increase stress relieving hormones, provides sustained energy, and are metabolized slowly to even out blood sugar

Tips to Avoid Stress Eating

- Eat regularly during the day and do not skip meals. If you are overly hungry you are at risk of making bad choices and eating too much.
- When you or your children are looking for food, ask if you are hungry, bored or stressed. If you are not hungry, try to distract yourself with another activity or eat something that provides chewing satisfaction such as raw carrots, celery, fresh fruit or frozen grapes.
- Don't feel like you need to keep sweet or salty treats in your home for your kids. It's always a good time to teach them about healthy foods that they can turn to when they are hungry and how to differentiate hunger, boredom and stress.
- Have healthy snacks available and prepared ahead of time for quick consumption for the entire family.
- Plan for times when you family can enjoy comfort foods together to avoid feelings of deprivation and to make it a special experience.

More on Healthy Eating During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Nutritional Strategies to Ease Anxiety — [Click Here](#)

Eating During COVID-19: Improve Your Mood and Lower Stress — [Click Here](#)

How to Curb Emotional Eating During the COVID-19 Pandemic — [Click Here](#)

Eating Healthfully During Stressful Times — [Click Here](#)

