

441 N. Central Ave. Suite 2, Campbell, CA 95008  
[www.bayareanutrition.com](http://www.bayareanutrition.com)

Phone: (408) 370-7731  
Fax: (408) 370-7732

## **Nutrition and COVID 19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned our lives upside down—we want you to know you are not alone!

**Bay Area Nutrition (BAN)** will continue to **provide nutrition therapy** and be there to support you and your families. Our amazing team of dietitians at BAN have systems in place to work with clients virtually, and have been able to smoothly transition to telehealth. Clients are adapting to working virtually and are grateful for our support and care.

During our nutrition therapy sessions, we are seeing common themes of fear and uncertainty. What we experience in life is reflected in our relationship with food and body. Clients and parents ask what and how do I feed my family? What should I do if I can't get fresh produce? How do I get my teen to eat when they sleep all day? How do I make sure our meals are healthy? How do I stop my kids from eating all the junk food? These are common questions, but we have answers.

Some report worries about having enough food, frustrations about not being able to get products they want and having to tolerate non-preferred or triggering foods. Clients report more stress eating, eating to numb out, eating in isolation, binging, eating more 'comfort foods' and restricting. All of these food behaviors make sense during this time. For those suffering with mental illness, including eating disorders, the fear and uncertainty can make recovery and life more difficult.

Our advice: **Stop, Pause, Breathe** and do the **Best You Can** with what you've got. Nutrition plays an important role in mental and physical health. Inadequate nutrition can cause or exacerbate depression, anxiety, rigidity, and disordered eating. During this time gentleness and compassion with ourselves and our loved ones around food and, well everything else right now is more important than ever.

Routine can provide a sense of normalcy and control in a time of uncertainty:

- **Schedule sleep and wake up time.** With all that we are going through, we may need more sleep, but too much or going to bed at late hours is not good.
- **Daily outside time.** Fresh air and sunshine can heal. Take a walk, play outside, do homework outside or plan a picnic in your yard.
- **Daily physical activity or movement time.** This can be some outside exercise, an online video, dancing in your living room, running around outside with family. Ideally it should be fun.

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- **Scheduled meal and snack times.** Be sure to address the: When, What, and Where of eating. People suffering from mental illness and eating disorders may need extra support to make sure meals and snack are adequate and not being missed.
  - **When:** Schedule routine times when to have meals and snacks.
  - **Where:** Find a table or space in the home where everyone can come together with minimal distractions and eat together. This can be a good time to connect and socialize. It is important to keep the talk light, not bringing added stress.
  - **What:** If you can, offer some protein, produce, dairy, fats and grains/starches for each meal, this will provide a solid nutrition base. Snacks can be 2-3 different foods from different groups.

Be gentle with yourself during this time with regard to food and food rules. Be sure to set up systems so you and your family can succeed at getting adequate nutrition and hopefully enjoy some nice meals together.

Our team of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists at BAN are happy to support you and your family. If you have concerns, please reach out to us at Bay Area Nutrition—we are here to help you!

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Email: [Admin@BayAreaNutrition.com](mailto:Admin@BayAreaNutrition.com)