

## **Media Contact**

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## **COVID-19: Avoid Weight Gain during the Pandemic**

***Attribute to:** Mandy Guide, RDN, LD, Clinical Dietitian at Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital*

### **How do I avoid gaining the “Quarantine 15”?**

Remind yourself of your personal goals, and decide if weight loss or weight maintenance is one of them. It is easy to say that weight gain is inevitable during this time, but that is not necessarily true. If you choose to stay on track and make a healthy lifestyle a priority during this time, you are not destined for the “Quarantine 15”.



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### **How do I stay on track?**

**Log food daily!** Now is a better time than ever to start food logging. It is the gold standard of weight loss, helping you to stay accountable every day, every meal, every snack. You can write it down in a journal or use an app to log your daily calorie intake, plus protein, fiber, etc. There are plenty of free apps available. Find the one that works best for you.

**Avoid mindless snacking.** This is likely a tough one right now being stuck inside. Remember your goals. Before you stand in front of the fridge, ask yourself “Am I hungry or just bored or tired (or whatever else you might be feeling)?” If you are NOT hungry, step away from the fridge. If you ARE hungry, here are some guidelines to remember while reading a label:

- Keep the snack less than or equal to 150 calories.
- Make sure there is at least 5 grams or more of fiber and protein combined.
- Keep sugars less than 6 grams per serving.

Some other things to keep in mind while snacking:

- Avoid eating in front of a screen/computer/TV. Sit down at the table to avoid distractions while eating.
- Avoid eating from the bag (chips/popcorn/nuts). It is hard to monitor portion control when doing this. Portion out your serving and put the bag away.

**Have a plan: Failing to plan is planning to fail!** Try writing down meals/snacks for the day the night before or the morning of. Having a blueprint of your day can help you have some direction. This also goes for those limited grocery store trips. Make sure you write down a list for what you need. It may be helpful for you to look up some simple, healthy recipes. Write down the healthy ingredients you will need. And, avoid going to the grocery store hungry!

**Get creative with healthy foods.** This may be the hardest goal of all, as I understand access to foods can be limited. Some ideas: canned chicken or tuna, low sodium beans, canned or frozen fruits/vegetables, Greek or light yogurt, light string cheese, nuts, eggs, low fat mayonnaise, turkey/chicken lunchmeat, cereals (that follow the snack guidelines below for fiber, protein and sugar). [ChooseMyPlate.gov](https://www.choosemyplate.gov) has lots of ideas.

**Avoid liquid calories.** Aim to drink only 0-5 calorie beverages. Avoid liquid calories like pop, juice and energy drinks. Substitute with water, diet drinks and sugar-free options. Milk is okay but try to have 1% or skim milk only.

**Practice the plate method during eating meals.** Be sure you are getting 3-4 oz lean protein at each meal, practicing portion control with carbohydrates, and filling half your plate with non-starchy vegetables. This combo of protein and fiber is more filling than a plateful of pasta, and can help control blood sugars.

**MOVE, MOVE, MOVE!** Any way, any time, any how! Get creative. Look at videos online; download an exercise app, or simply put on some music and dance. If it's safe for you, take a walk or run outside. If you have exercise equipment in your home, put it to use. Make a daily plan for how many minutes per day you can be active. Remember, most of us have a little more time on our hands than normal. Make the most of it!