

**LONDON
CENTRE FOR
INTUITIVE
EATING**



**A Guide to
Grocery Shopping
& Meal Planning**

Coping with the threat of scarcity

This resource aims to help you navigate grocery shopping and cooking when there's a risk of physical food scarcity, and was created in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was designed with those with eating disorders in mind, however please consult your healthcare professional for personalised advice.

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**Developed by The London
Centre for Intuitive Eating.**

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Shopping and cooking with the threat of scarcity



During this time of uncertainty, a lot of us have disrupted routines, are trying to avoid public spaces, or are otherwise stuck at home. Because of this, our normal approach to shopping and preparing food might get flipped on its head, which can add stress and anxiety to an already overwhelming situation. For those of us who usually buy food out or shop on a regular basis and only buy what we need in the moment, having to be prepared for a longer period of time can be a pretty daunting concept. And on top of this, a lot of people have unfortunately gone into full doomsday prepping mode, have cleared out supermarket shelves, booked out online delivery slots, and have left the rest of us high and dry.

Funnily enough, this scarcity mindset is something we're all too familiar with at LCIE, as it's one of the outcomes of the dieting cycle. When we're faced with deprivation (whether it's due to a physical shortage, a diet, or a restrictive eating disorder), our bodies have a natural survival instinct that aims to counteract this and keep us safe. This creates a mindset of scarcity and deprivation which in turn leads to feeling out of control around food, and we get urges to stock up with more than we need. While this is a natural mechanism that helps us make sure we're eating enough, it's not so helpful when it's on a mass scale that leaves some of us behind. You might be experiencing some degree of this - we've seen reports of supermarket shelves being emp-

ty, with lots of the basics not available. Some of our clients have also said that the threat of not having enough to eat has triggered that scarcity mindset, causing them to feel restricted and deprived psychologically, even when there is enough to eat. If this resonates with you, know that you're not alone. Try to tune in to what your body's telling you and honour your needs, whether this is through food, or other self care practices.

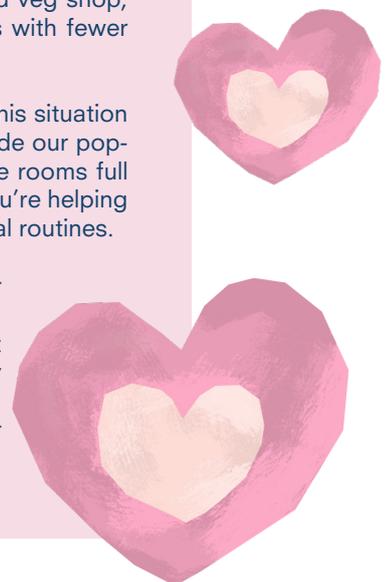
While this can feel like a weird, stressful limbo, know that we've got your back. We wanted to create a resource that helps us make the best of a tricky situation, giving you some structure to use as a guide, but with flexibility depending on what's accessible to you. We recognise that you might not be able to get hold of your usual staples, fresh foods or things that diet culture has told us make up a "healthy" diet, but in times like these, it's reasonable and responsible to let health take the back seat. We've always maintained that there's no such thing as a 'perfect' diet; there's no one 'correct' way to eat, and it's always better to eat something than to go hungry. We stand by that now more than ever. There's never been a better time to ditch diet culture - what's important now (and always) is that you're eating regularly, eating enough, and looking after your mental health too. So we're here to ease some of that anxiety and help you think outside the box (that diet culture often forces us into) and come up with creative ways to shop and put meals together.

Consider your community

The aim of physical distancing is to reduce contact with other people, so if you need to go to the shops, try to make the most of it. If you have a car or are able to carry more, consider asking your neighbours if they need anything, and leave it on their doorstep. Additionally, while many of the supermarkets are pretty bare at the moment, lots of smaller, independent shops might still be well stocked, and you get the added bonus of supporting small & local businesses too! So while this might mean you have to try a few different places, consider your local fruit and veg shop, bakeries & smaller stores, as you might have a few more options, and cross paths with fewer people along the way.

Also, while we can't predict the future, it's worth noting that it's highly unlikely that this situation will last forever - it's not our new normal. Our food system is well equipped to provide our population with food, so while shelves might be empty, there are warehouses and store rooms full of food that is waiting to be shipped out to shops. By only buying what you need, you're helping this system return to normal a little quicker, which will help us all get back to our usual routines.

If it's accessible to you, try to think of helping those around you as well. Consider donating to a food bank if you can afford to, and try to be mindful of others who need to access food too. Most people are stressing about food at the moment, and a lot of people don't have the financial or physical means to stock up & buy more than they usually do. So if you can afford to, consider buying things that there's more stock of, leaving the cheaper and more scarce things for people in need. If we all shop with our communities in mind, it means there'll be enough to go around.



Before you get going

Have a read of this full document, get a good idea of how you're going to approach this and what will work best for you. The following is not a hard and fast set of rules, just some ideas to help you feel more comfortable approaching shopping at this weird time. The framework we've outlined below is designed to be used as a baseline - the bare minimum of things you'll need to eat for a few days. If you're resourceful, you might be able to make it last a week, but we know that it's a lot of food to carry home with you if you don't have access to a car or public transport, and quite far ahead to plan, so try and approach it in a way that will suit your needs, and don't beat yourself up if a few things don't go exactly to plan.

There's a lot of conversation and stigma around the "right" way to eat, regardless of our situation, but try to lock that out of your space right now, and focus on eating for self care. Everyone shops, cooks and eats in different ways, so remember you only have to do what's accessible to you, not what everyone else says you should be doing. Yes, being stuck at home gives us a great opportunity to learn to cook, but it's more important to stick to familiar and reliable

options rather than going out on a limb with a complicated recipe you've never tried before. Sticking to simpler foods also means you might be able to cobble things together and use ingredients in multiple ways, so don't put pressure on yourself to go above and beyond in the kitchen. So your meals might not be perfect, you might come up with some strange concoctions, end up eating leftovers for a few days, or be completely reliant on frozen meals for a while, and that's all okay.

We've tried to design this guide with a "typical" diet in mind, however we want to acknowledge that there's a lot of individual variation person to person, and even within that, our appetites fluctuate over time and can be really unpredictable in times of stress. Being flexible and responsive to our appetite cues, hunger levels, taste preferences and cooking failures is a normal part of life, so try to be compassionate towards yourself and remember it's okay to pop out for a few extras where you need to. And although stress can suppress your appetite, we always recommend eating every 3-4 hours as an act of self care; this will help keep us nourished and strong.

Before you hit the shops, it's a good idea to do a stock-take of what's already in your cupboards - is there a tin of beans lurking in the back of the pantry? A half pack of noodles that you bought for a recipe once? Do you have fresh produce that's on the verge of going out of date that could be thrown into a stew? This is a really good opportunity to use up things in your pantry and find creative ways to do so. It also means you might already have a few staples, which can save you precious space in your shopping cart, and make sure there's enough to go around.



Okay, so let's get into it.

Throughout this whole process we're aiming to get foods that you can use in multiple ways - so thinking about getting bigger packs of things & quantities that will last multiple servings or meals - you could batch cook a chilli, a pot of pasta sauce, a casserole or curry that will give you a few meals. Read this full list before you go into the supermarket, and think of how you'd like to approach it. We've listed the food groups by level of importance & priority in terms of making sure you've got enough food, but if you shop in this order it might mean you're crossing back and forth across the supermarket.

With that in mind, when you enter the supermarket, walk through the fresh produce & chilled prepared food section to get an idea of what there is in terms of fresh meat, dairy, fruit and veg, then head straight to the middle aisles where you can get foods that will last you a little longer. Pick up anything that jumps out to you on the way.

We also want to acknowledge that you might not be able to meet this full list, find everything you want, and you might end up buying products and brands you're unfamiliar with. Try not to freak out if this happens, you can always check another store, come back another time or search the internet for recipes. The important thing right now is that you've got some food that you can work with to feed and look after yourself.

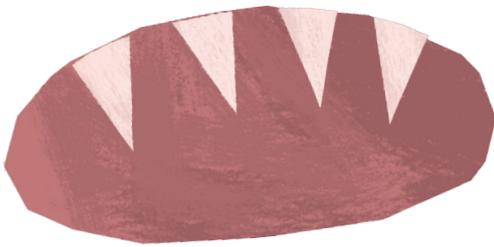
Right at the end of this resource, we've written out a meal plan template, but recommend filling it out once you've got all your food together; otherwise you might end up with crucial ingredients missing & not be able to make the meals you planned. For now, just keep in mind that you're shopping for breakfast, lunch, dinner, AND snacks (and we recommend getting more snacks than you think you'd need!). If you can't get hold of the things you usually go for, substitute them with other things from the list, and remember it's okay to be flexible on brands & things that are usually off limits

Shopping list:

There's a condensed version at the end!

Grain staples - PICK 2

First we'll pick some grains as these will form the basis of your meals. Having these staples at home will give you versatility with cooking. Try to buy these in big packs if you can, but they can be heavy to carry. We start with grains because it can be easier to get a sense of what 'goes' with your grain, and gives you some direction for what other bits you might like to pick up (even if it's not totally ideal!).



- Pasta (fresh or dried - check the fresh pasta section)
- Noodles (fresh or dried - check the Asian section)
- Potato
- Rice/Oats/couscous/barley/quinoa/freekeh/semolina/polenta/other grain
- Flour if you're willing & able to bake things

Other grains - PICK 2

These are things you'll go through quicker, but are really good to have for breakfasts, lunches and snacks.

- Bread, rolls, pita bread, crumpets, english muffins, bagels
- Cereal
- Frozen chips/ hash browns/ potato waffles/ potato croquettes/ roast potatoes
- Pastries/ pre-rolled pastry
- Tortillas/tortilla chips/ wraps
- Pizza bases
- Yorkshire pudding (frozen or mix)



Fats - PICK 3

Fats add flavour to your meals and are really important in keeping you satisfied throughout the day.

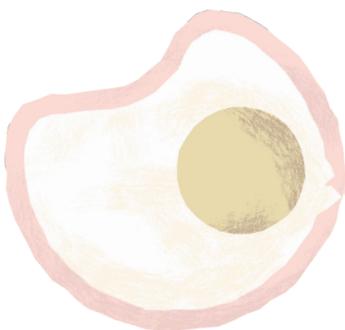
- Oils
- Butter
- Margarine
- Avocado
- Nuts/nut butter
- Coconut milk, cream or oil
- Seeds or tahini
- Salad dressing/whole egg mayo



Proteins - PICK 3-4

Then we'll move on to protein foods- these things will help the meal start to take shape. Try to get things that you can use in multiple ways, or buy bigger packs and freeze some.

- Fresh meat/poultry
- Sausages, bacon, chorizo, salami, ham or other sandwich meat (turkey, chicken)
- Pre-cooked & chilled chicken, pork, beef, crab or prawns
- Frozen meat/poultry - chicken strips, nuggets, burgers, meatballs
- Fresh, smoked, frozen or tinned fish & other seafood including frozen prawns, fish fingers, tins of tuna, salmon, mackerel or anchovies
- Eggs/ cartons of long life liquid eggs
- Tinned or dried lentils, chickpeas, beans
- Baked beans
- Tofu, tempeh, seitan, quorn, textured vegetable protein (TVP)
- Falafel, veggie burgers, vegetarian sausages, veggie nuggets
- Scotch eggs, pork pies, cocktail sausages



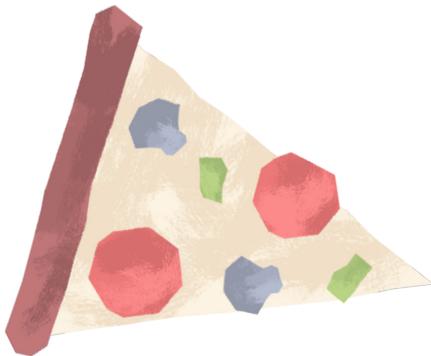
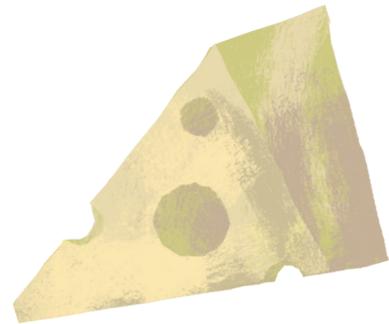
Shopping list:

There's a condensed version at the end!

Calcium - PICK 3

Calcium foods are really useful again for adding flavour, but they can also form the basis of sauces, or be dolloped on top of meals.

- Milk/fortified dairy alternatives
- Long life milk/ powdered milk or dairy alternatives
- Yoghurt
- Cheese
- Creme fraiche, cream cheese, cream or sour cream or plant based alternatives
- Custard, ice cream, puddings/dairy or plant based deserts



Meal kits & ready meals PICK AT LEAST 3

Don't underestimate the power of a meal kit - these things will help you make the most of a scarce pantry. If all you've been able to get are the basics, these things will help make your meals palatable, enjoyable and satisfying.

- Jars of pasta sauce/curry sauce, sachets of stir fry sauce
- Boxed pasta, curry packs, meal kits (like dahl or curry kits, Mexican meal kits)
- Frozen meals, pizzas, ready meals
- Frozen desserts - ice cream, pies
- Sandwiches, salads, pastas, meal bits
- Sausage rolls, pies, quiches

Extra flavour & cooking bits PICK 3

These things can help add a lot of flavour to simple foods & (literally) spice things up a little; you'll be SO grateful when all you're left with is your grains and protein. If you're wanting to get creative in the kitchen, this is a good place to start - picking a few new spices or flavours gives you something to experiment with, without the risk of buying a more substantial meal component & it going to waste if things don't work out.

- Dried herbs, spices, garlic
- Sauces (hot sauce, soy sauce, oyster sauce, etc) & dressings
- Hummus or other dips like tzatziki, cheese and chive, sour cream and onion
- Jars of pesto, curry paste, pickles, salsas, chutneys,
- Olives or pickled veg, antipasto
- Stock cubes or miso paste
- Spreads - nut butters, jam, marmite
- Sugar or other sweeteners - honey, maple syrup
- Condiments - ketchup, mayonnaise (mix these together to make the ultimate dressing!)



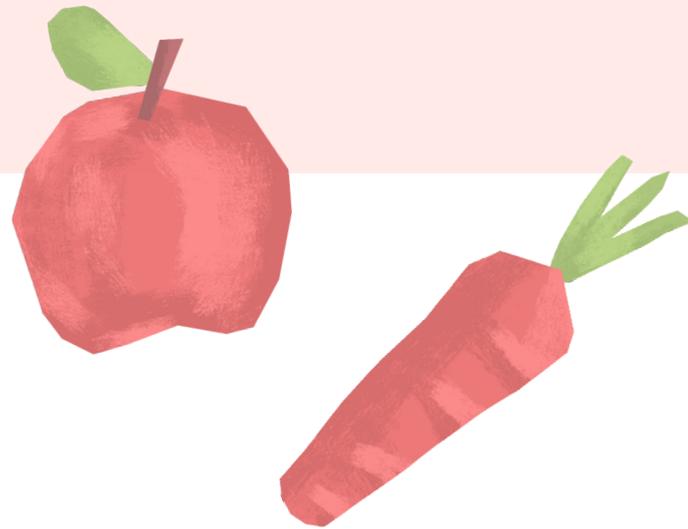
Shopping list:

There's a condensed version at the end!

Fibre - PICK 5+

With many supermarkets being low on fruit and veg at the moment, it's fine for it to take a back seat. Hit up the fresh produce section, the tinned aisle and the freezer section and try to choose things you enjoy. It's a good idea to leave this to last so you have a good idea of what you'll be cooking

- Fresh, frozen, dried or tinned fruit
- Fresh, frozen or tinned vegetables
- Tinned soups
- Tinned or dried lentil & beans
- Pre-made salads, coleslaw,
- Roast veg or stir fry mixes,
- Ready meal sides (cauliflower cheese, stuffed peppers)



SNACKS - PICK AT LEAST 3

Don't forget snacks! We've already got a few bits and pieces you'll be able to throw together to make snacks, but it's really useful to have some of the following things on hand to keep you going throughout the day. Choose things you enjoy, and in larger quantities than you'd think you need - remember that eating regularly & eating things that bring you comfort, pleasure and satisfaction is a form of self care.

- Cereal bars, flapjacks, breakfast biscuits, granola
- Sweets, chocolate, biscuits/cookies, trail mix
- Yoghurts, ice cream, pudding pots, mousse, custard
- Cakes, slices, muffins, doughnuts, pastries, desserts
- Crisps, crackers, oat cakes
- Nuts, jerky, roasted corn/peas/beans (like wasabi peas)
- Juice, squash or soft drinks, hot chocolate powder



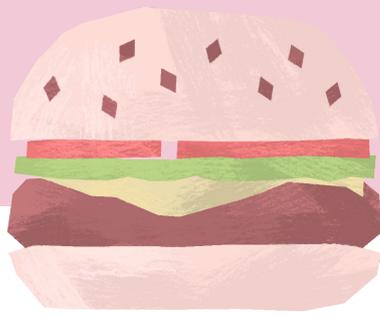
Remember:

These numbers are a guide and are intended to form the basis of your meals, not to be an exhaustive list, so if you can carry things, pick up extra. Remember that in a time of food scarcity, convenience foods are our friends and are really helpful in making sure we're eating enough. Don't be afraid to pick up things you might not usually go for, you can always google recipes when you get home and you might even find something you really like!

You might like to screenshot or take a photo of this:

Here's a condensed shopping list to take with you.

- 2 Staple Grains (rice, pasta, potatoes etc for the basis of main meals)
- 2 Other grains (cereals, breads, etc)
- 3 Fats (oils, butter, avocado, nut butter)
- 3-4 Proteins (meat/alternatives, eggs, soy products, beans & lentils)
- 3 Calcium (dairy/alternatives - cheese, milk, yoghurt, ice cream)
- 3 Meal kits/ready meals (jars of curry/pasta sauce, boxed pasta, meal kits)
- 3 Extra flavour & cooking bits (spices, stock, pesto, spreads)
- 3 + Fibre (fresh, frozen or tinned fruit and veg/legumes)
- 3 SNACKS (savoury & sweet, include fun foods!)
- Any extras: _____



Putting it all together

On the following page we've provided some space for you to plan out your meals - this will give you a good idea of how long your food will last, and give you an opportunity to make sure you've got all the ingredients you need. Remember it's okay if this food doesn't last a whole week, but try to think creatively, using ingredients in different ways. For example, if you picked up some dried lentils, you could use this to make a veggie bolognese, a dhal, and a soup with a few extra ingredients.

If you find yourself with relatively 'boring' staples, like tinned black beans and rice, try jazzing it up with a tangy sour cream and onion dip and a side of roasted broccoli. And don't forget, beans on toast with some cheese is a balanced and nutritious dinner.

You can also use some of these components in different ways - if you've made a pot of chilli, for example, you could have it with rice, or on a baked potato, or make it into nachos with some tortilla chips and cheese! The freezer is your friend when it comes to batch cooking, so consider picking up some containers so you can portion and freeze your food, or keep it in the fridge.

On that note, if you've picked up big portions of things like meat or fruit, you might like to consider freezing some so it'll last longer (if you have a freezer & enough space). If you are going to freeze things, try to pre-portion them so you don't have to defrost a whole pack of chicken breasts just to use one. Remember you can freeze bread (slice it first so you can take out a few pieces for toast), milk, cheese (again grate or cube it), and even cake! If you're not sure, have a quick

google, but there's a lot more that can be frozen than you might think.

It's also good to note that if there was any time for our food rules to go out the window, it's now. Eat when you feel hungry, and let yourself have extra snacks if that's what you feel like. Try to loosen your reins on what you "should" be eating at certain times, and approach your eating with kindness, flexibility and compassion. Chocolate cake for breakfast? Sure! Leftovers from dinner the previous day for lunch? Why not! Frozen samosas for a snack? Sounds great! Whatever you need to do to make yourself feel satisfied, go for it.

Now you've got all your food, let's put it all together. We'll be making a plan for breakfast, lunch and dinner plus three snacks throughout the day. For main meals, aim to include foods from ALL the following food groups: grain, protein, fibre (fruit/veg), fats, calcium. Try not to double up on food groups - cheese would count as a protein OR calcium food, not both. A good framework to build off is to have 1/3 of the plate filled with a grain, 1/3 filled with protein, no more than 1/3 filled with fibre (fruit/veg) and use fats & calcium foods to add flavour & dollop on top.

We know we've said it before, but we'll say it again: your food doesn't have to be perfect, it doesn't have to be fancy or gourmet, it's fine to eat convenience foods, 'processed' foods and foods that you don't usually let yourself eat, because with the threat of scarcity, the important thing is to look after yourself and make sure you're eating enough. We're also encouraging you to add in one self-care item each day (however small) to encourage you to look after yourself in amongst the uncertainty.

Ideas for self care

We've included some ideas for self care to help you look after yourself. Only do what's accessible to you and feels like it'll lift you up, rather than doing a bunch of things that end up adding stress and work to your day.

- Make sure you're eating regularly and enough - hopefully this guide will have helped you with this! Make sure to include fun foods & things that give you satisfaction, comfort and pleasure.
- If it feels good, try and create a morning and bedtime routine to anchor your day - especially at bedtime this can help us wind down and get enough sleep.
- Check in on yourself and make sure you're doing the things that make you feel good - this might be taking a break from social media, drinking enough water, changing your clothes (or pyjamas), washing your face, or brushing your teeth.
- Call a friend or family member - social connection is really important when we're isolated or otherwise distanced from each other. Checking in on someone you love will let them know you're there for them, and can help to take your mind off things for a while.
- Distract yourself - put on your favourite movie or tv show, read a book, play a game or do a jigsaw puzzle.
- Make your space comfortable and cozy - light candles, cozy up with a pillow or blanket, open a window for some fresh air, change the sheets on your bed (or just your pillow case) look after your plants and tidy and clean when you're feeling up to it.
- Want to try mindfulness? Download an app like Headspace or Calm - for a month's free Calm - go to <https://www.calm.com/calmhealthtrial>
- Try baking - You'd be surprised what you can make with a little - look up recipes based on what you've got in the cupboards, or see if anything you've got in can be used as substitutes for ingredients like eggs, butter or milk.



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast							
Snack							
Lunch							
Snack							
Dinner							
Snack/dessert							
Self care activity for today							

Here are some suggested portion sizes to guide you

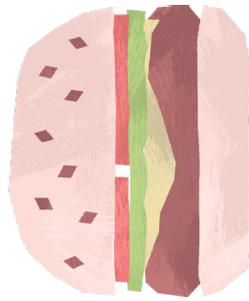
Bread - 2 slices medium
 Bagel - 1 regular or 2 'thin' bagels
 Rice - ¾ cup cooked
 Pasta - 1 cup cooked
 Potato - 1 medium
 Cereal - 1 cup
 Chips/fries - 10 'chunky

chips' or wedges
 1/2 regular (12") pizza - but don't forget the sides!
 Cheese - ½ cup grated or 2 matchbox sized pieces of hard or soft cheese
 Fish - 1 medium fillet
 Chicken - medium breast

¾ cup minced beef
 Eggs - 2 medium eggs
 ½ avocado
 Nut butter - like peanut butter - 2 tablespoons
 Falafel - 3-4 balls
 1 cup milk or dairy alternative
 Butter, margarine or vegetable

oil - 1 tablespoon
 1 apple
 1 banana
 6-8 strawberries
 6-8 grapes
 ½ cup cooked veg like sweet-corn, peas, carrots
 1 cup salad

2 scoops regular ice cream
 1 regular cupcake/slice of cake
 1 regular doughnut



Here's an example of how it might look like in practice.

We acknowledge that not everything we've listed is available everywhere, and it might not be applicable to you and your family, but we wanted to make sure this formula for shopping would actually work, so here's an example of how you might use this guide. This example was made for one week for one person, on the assumption that there was nothing in the cupboards. Keep in mind that this isn't a meal plan, it's just an example of how you can use a few ingredients in a bunch of different ways.

Groceries:

Staple Grains

Large bag of rice, pack of pasta

Other grains

Loaf of bread, bag of frozen chips

Fats

Olive oil, coconut milk, peanut butter

Proteins

Large pack of chicken thighs, sausages, tofu, baked beans

Calcium

Block of cheese, pot of yoghurt, milk

Meal kits/ready meals

Fajita kit, jar of pasta sauce, frozen pizza

Extra flavour & cooking bits

Pesto, curry paste, garlic,

Fibre

Onions, carrots, frozen peas, peppers, apples

Snacks

Crackers, chocolate, flapjacks

Any extras

Cereal, salad mix, nuts,

Meal ideas from this grocery haul:

Breakfast:

Nut butter/beans/cheese on toast/cereal + milk

Lunch:

Chicken + pesto + cheese + salad sandwich

Beans on toast + cheese

Toasted cheese sandwich

Pasta + pesto + cheese

Leftovers

Chips + sausages/chicken

Dinner, All cooked in olive oil & served with veg/salad:

Frozen pizza

Sir fry with tofu + coconut milk + curry paste + rice

Chips + sausages + beans, pasta + pesto + chicken + cheese

Jar of curry sauce + tofu + rice + dollop of yoghurt

Pasta + jar of sauce + sausage + cheese

Chicken Fajitas + cheese

Snacks:

Yoghurt

Apple + nut butter

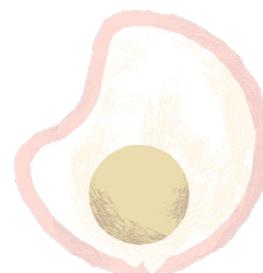
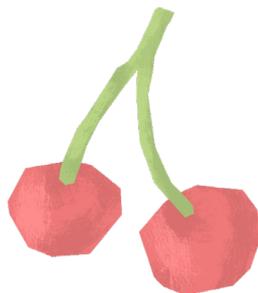
Flapjacks

Chocolate

Nuts

Cheese/ nut butter + crackers

Cereal + milk



We hope you find this guide useful!

Please look after yourself and your community, and don't hesitate to reach out if there's anything we can do to support you. We are currently offering one off, discounted appointments with our nutrition counsellors, and have a range of courses & counselling options to help you build a healthy relationship with food and your body.

Love, the LCIE Team xx