Coronavirus grocery list: What items you need to buy in case of self-quarantine
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Stock up on these nutrient-dense, shelf-stable items in case of an emergency.

Concerns about the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes – COVID-19 – have been dominating news headlines as the outbreak continues to spread worldwide.

As the number of reported cases in the U.S. continues to rise, many Americans are preparing for the possibility of large-scale school and business closures, enhanced travel restrictions and even the possibility of being quarantined.

While the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 remains low nationwide, thousands of Americans have been advised to self-quarantine due to recent travel activity. NBC News Medical Correspondent Dr. John Torres confirmed to TODAY that self-quarantine is currently being recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for anyone who has been to China, or other affected areas, within the last 14 days. Self-quarantine is also being advised for those who have been exposed to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Infectious disease experts currently believe the incubation period for COVID-19 is 14 days.

“Having someone who has potentially been exposed to the virus self-quarantine for 14 days would ensure they ... don’t spread it to others,” explained Dr. Torres, who added that this precaution should help slow the rate of transmission of the virus.

Around the world, people are rushing to their local supermarkets to stock up on non-perishables and household items – but should you? In the event that you do need to self-quarantine, or if you find yourself caring for someone who may have been exposed to coronavirus, it's a good idea to be prepared by keeping enough nutritious foods in the house that will last for up to two weeks.
TODAY Food has put together a list of nutrient-dense, shelf-stable foods, plus heartier produce items, that will help keep your family nourished and satisfied in the event that they will be staying inside for an extended period of time.

**Canned goods**

Canned items are staple goods to stock up on during many types of emergencies. If kept at a moderate temperature (about 75 degrees), canned goods may last decades. While those in quarantine won’t be holed up indefinitely, having canned veggies and fruits on hand is a great way to ensure that you’re still consuming essential vitamins and minerals.

- **Fruit:** Look for canned fruit that has no added sugar. Depending on the type of fruit, the vitamin C will vary from about 45% (peaches) to 90% (grapefruit) of your recommended daily allowance per serving. Pick up a variety of mixed fruit bowls: Canned peaches, pears, pineapple, grapefruit and mandarins are all great options.
- **Vegetables:** A great source of fiber, vitamin C and other nutrients, canned veggies like corn, carrots, peas and green beans, are a great addition to lots of meals, from omelets to casseroles. Look for low-sodium varieties. Canned pumpkin might seem like it’s just for the fall, but this versatile ingredient is loaded with beta-carotene, which is essential for keeping your immune system strong. Look canned beets, too, as one serving of this nutritious root vegetable contains 1.5 grams of fiber, 1.5 milligrams of iron and 125 milligrams of potassium.
- **Beans:** All varieties of canned beans — from black beans to pinto beans — are a great source of plant protein and can be used in everything from tacos to grain bowls and soups. Check the label to make sure there's no added salt or seasonings you don't like. Grab a few cans of garbanzo beans if you like to make your own hummus.
- **Ravioli:** While some canned pastas tend to be high in sodium (around 700 milligrams per serving), cheese ravioli provides carbohydrates, protein and is low in saturated fat. If you have kids, keeping a few of these on hand will be a fun way to perk up meal time.
- **Fish:** A wonderful source of both protein and omega-3 fatty acids, canned fish (such as tuna, salmon, anchovies and sardines), can
be used in sandwiches and main dishes. Pick up a dozen cans – many stores offer discounts when you buy multiples – as they'll last a long time.

- **Soups and chilis:** Pick up several different varieties for everyone in your household. Look for low-sodium soups and be mindful of the fat content of cream-based dishes. Keep in mind that you can always perk up relatively plain soups with extra veggies and your favorite spices.

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**Americans stock up as coronavirus cases grow**

MARCH 2, 2020

**Pantry staples**

You might already have plenty of pasta and peanut butter in your pantry, but when you have to rely on these items for more than a few days, they tend to run out quickly. Restock your kitchen cabinets with these essentials and other family favorites.

- **Applesauce:** Whether it's in a jar or a pouch, applesauce without any added sugar makes a healthy snack for kids and adults. It can also be added to muffins or other baked goods for a boost of natural sweetness and fiber.

- **Quinoa:** Quick cooking and packed with 8 grams of protein per cup, quinoa is a healthy seed that makes a great base for grain bowls and salads; it's also great added to soups and stews. Brown rice, farro, barley and bulgur are other tasty whole-grain options. Pick up a couple boxes of each.

- **Pasta:** This pantry staple is essential, whether you choose the classic wheat-based kind or a bean-based, gluten-free variety. A 1-pound box of dried pasta makes eight servings, so a family of four may want to buy four or more boxes for a two-week period. Jarred pasta sauce is also smart to have on hand, or you can make your own sauce from canned tomatoes.

- **Chicken, beef or vegetable stock:** Low in calories, but also great source of protein, stocks are great as the base of hearty soups and stews. They also add great flavor to cooked grains and rice.

- **Dried fruit:** While dried fruits do not contain the water that fresh fruit does, they do contain plenty of nutrients. Dried fruit can be used to top cereal, oatmeal and yogurt, and it can also be added to baked goods. A few containers of different varieties should be enough for two weeks.

- **Nuts and nut butter:** Nutrient-dense and full of plant-based protein, nuts contain heart-healthy fats, as well as essential minerals.
Nut butter can be spread on apples or stirred into oatmeal and yogurt. Pick up a couple different jars of peanut butter and almond butter for variety.

- **Seeds**: Seeds like chia, flax and hemp provide alpha-linolenic fatty acids, which provide anti-inflammatory benefits. Store seeds in the refrigerator and nuts in the freezer to help extend their freshness.

- **Baby food and formula**: Depending on your baby’s age, he or she may be eating grown-up food in some form. But it's good idea to stock up on some ready-to-eat pouches and kid-friendly snacks to supplement meals. And if there's an infant in the house, make sure you have enough formula for at least two weeks.

- **Shelf-stable, pasteurized milk**: This type of milk is very common in Europe, but Americans don't use it often. Once opened, it does require refrigeration and lasts for about a week.

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**Frozen foods**

Don't overcrowd your freezer with too many items since, unlike canned items, a lot of frozen foods don't last forever and you don't want to be wasteful. However, frozen fruits and veggies are often just as nutritious as their fresh counterparts.

- **Vegetables**: Buy a variety of frozen veggies to add to pasta, stir-fries or soups. I recommend a variety of green veggies, like peas, broccoli and spinach. Get about four big bags.

- **Fruit**: Frozen fruit, such as cubed mango, peaches, berries and even dragon fruit, are great for smoothies and make easy desserts. Like their canned counterparts, they're also a great source of vitamin C.

- **Burritos**: Basic bean burritos are rich in protein and can be dressed up with salsa and cheese. These don't take up much space in the freezer and they're incredibly easy to reheat.

- **Pizza or pizza crust**: If you have room in your freezer for these, they're probably worth the space. While not essential for basic nutritional needs, freshly baked pizza will be a welcome weeknight treat. You can always spruce it up with veggies and other toppings.

- **Meat and poultry**: Chicken breast, ground beef and ground turkey all freeze well. They can be turned into the centerpiece of a meal, or they can be added to soups and chilis to bulk them up.

- **Frozen treats**: Staying at home for a two-week period can be stressful, so don't deny yourself (or your family) a treat or two. Pick up a few pints of ice cream and a box or two of no-sugar-added ice pops.
Confirmed cases of coronavirus in the United States

NBC News has confirmed more than 120 cases in the U.S. There have been nine deaths, all in Washington state.

Notes
Data as of March 4, 9:30 a.m. ET.
Cases in California, Washington, Texas, Nebraska and Utah include individuals repatriated from Wuhan, China, and the Diamond Princess cruise ship.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state officials and NBC News
Graphic: Jiachuan Wu & Joe Murphy / NBC News

Breakfast items & snacks

- **Cereal**: Get a few boxes of high-fiber cereals (look for varieties with at least 5 grams per serving), such as Fiber One or All Bran.
- **Instant oatmeal packets or rolled oats**: Instant oatmeal makes a very filling breakfast and you can always add a spoonful of nut butter for more protein, or a few tablespoons of dried fruit for sweetness. Rolled oats are ideal for baking, making energy bites and creating **overnight oats**.
- **Granola bars and protein bars**: While you may not be able to leave the house to exercise, you can still do some yoga, stretch and perform weight-bearing exercises at home if you feel well enough to do so. Having some ready-to-go snacks on hand is still a good idea.
- **Jerky**: If you’re an omnivore, keep some beef, turkey or pork jerky in the pantry. Look for brands that are low in sugar and have minimal preservatives. Meat sticks and bars are also another great source of protein.
- **Popcorn**: If you’re going to be inside for two weeks, chances are you’ll be watching plenty of shows on Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime. Buy several boxes of microwaveable popcorn, or a jar of kernels if you like to make it the old fashioned way.

Longer-lasting perishables

Preparing for the long haul doesn't mean you have to totally forget about eating fresh items. However, some perishable goods do last longer than others. Before you pick up items like eggs, bread and butter, check the packages’ expiration date to make sure you’re not cutting it close.

- **Apples**: Filling and versatile, apples are rich in fiber, vitamin C and potassium. Plus, they'll keep fresh for about three weeks when refrigerated.
Produce:

- **Bananas:** Fresh bananas don't last very long, but this is one fruit that freezes really well. Buy a bunch, cut them up and freeze the slices. They're great for smoothies or dipped in chocolate for a fun treat.
- **Oranges and lemons:** Bursting with vitamin C, citrus fruits will keep your immune system humming and last in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. The zest and juice from these fruits will also help brighten up the flavor in a variety of marinades and recipes.
- **Eggs:** Fresh eggs should be stored in their original carton to protect them. They will last three weeks after purchase when refrigerated properly. If you boil your eggs, they will last for up to a week. If your family really, really loves eggs (and you like to bake), consider stocking up and buying up to four dozen eggs for a two-week period.
- **Butter:** An essential baking ingredient and spread, butter will last in the fridge for a few months.
- **Cheese:** Both block-style and shredded cheeses should last for about two weeks, as long as you seal the packages properly after opening them. Harder cheeses like cheddar and pecorino can last for a month. Softer cheeses like Gouda and brie last about two weeks.
- **Carrots:** Carrots are high in [beta-carotene](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3042965/), which is necessary for skin and eye health. Per 1 cup serving, carrots provide nearly 4 grams of fiber. A bag of unpeeled carrots will last for at least two weeks in the produce drawer of your fridge.
- **Garlic and onions:** Both of these flavor boosters can be used in hundreds of recipes, and they last for a very, very long time. Stored at room temperature, these savory bulbs will last up to two months.
- **Potatoes and sweet potatoes:** Both sweet and white potatoes are potassium-rich all-stars and will last at room temperature for about two weeks.
- **Cabbage:** High in fiber and loaded with nutrients, cabbage is a great item to keep on hand. A whole head of cabbage will last in the refrigerator for about a week. You can shred it and add it to tacos and salads, or braise it to make a dish like [stuffed cabbage](https://www.seriouseats.com/2014/02/stuffed-cabbage-recipe.html).
- **Bread (bagels, sliced bread, tortillas):** While certain bread products can become moldy in a few days, you can extend their life by freezing them. To freeze bread, keep the product in its original packaging and place it in the freezer. When you want to eat it, let it thaw at room temperature and then toast it. Bagels, tortillas and even English muffins can all be frozen. Buy enough bread so that each family member can enjoy two slices (or one bagel or muffin) each day.

**Pharmacy items**

According to Dr. Torres, if you must self-quarantine, it's imperative to make sure you have enough of any prescribed medications to last for a two-week period. In addition to the medicine you need to take, pick up the following items (if you're running low) while you're in the pharmacy section of your grocery store:

- Multivitamins
- Ibuprofen or Tylenol
- Children's fever reducer (if there are kids in the family)
- Cough medicine
- Saline solution
- Allergy medicine, like Benadryl and Claritin
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Dish soap and other cleaning essentials, like sanitizing wipes
- Band aids

Keep this list handy in the event of a worst-case-scenario situation but, until then, keep in mind that the best defense against any virus is to practice thorough [hand-washing](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/) — which is a great habit to keep up all year long.

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