Feeding our children during this stressful time

We recognize that feeding issues will intensify during this time. Stores may not always have the specific foods your children eat or restaurant food may not be available. Children who are home from school may seek out food and graze throughout the day. We know we will see some regression, with feeding and other behaviors as their typical routines are changed. At this time, we wanted to provide you with some tips to manage feeding concerns as they arise.

1. **Structure and schedule**: It is very important to keep a daily routine at home while children are out of school, especially around mealtimes. Routines help make life predictable and keeps kids organized
   1. Meals should occur at the same time every day, just like a school schedule.
   2. Limit snacking between meals to regular snack times.
   3. Allow water between meals, but limit juice and milk to mealtimes
   4. Set up fun activities between meals and snacks when children are most likely to ask for food. These are good technology times, arts and crafts, or other hands on activities.
   5. Going outside to play and exercise during these times is also a good idea, as long as it is safe and weather permitting.
   6. If you need help setting up some picture schedules to show children what they can expect at home, let us know.
2. **Shopping:** Many stores are running out of foods and/or are setting limits on what you can buy. Consider calling your local grocery stores (or go to customer service) and see what they are doing for ordering. Wegman’s is ordering food daily, but only half of what they are ordering is getting delivered. They may be able to accommodate you with some specific food items or special order things. You can mention you have a child with special dietary needs, especially those who are allergen free as those items are running out quickly.
   1. Consider ordering some dry goods on line through Walmart.com or other websites. They may stop deliveries soon, so check this quickly.
   2. Some restaurants are still doing take out or deliveries, check with the ones you frequent if those are the only foods available at this time.
   3. You can call the company too to see if they can send you some of the foods your child needs.
   4. If you are running low on food, Food Link is offering supplies. Check out the website for information about food distribution
   5. https://foodlinkny.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIrN2C096h6AIVhK7ICh1x-QQ1EAAYASAAEgLdQfD\_BwE
3. Stores are running out of dairy products. **Limit milk consumption** to make sure you have enough to last (16-24 ounces per day is enough).
   1. Some formula companies are sending out extra samples. You can call the number of the container to see what they are offering.
4. Try not to let children overeat at this time. You want the foods you buy to last. Offer what a typical portion size your child can eat and then end the meal. Increasing hunger for mealtimes should increase the volume they eat of healthier foods.
5. Children who are **brand specific**: We know stores are running out of their favorite foods. This may be the time to start working on food chaining and helping children get used to different brands of the foods they like. Do it as “food experiments,” making it fun and enjoyable. Let them know this is all you have right now.
   1. This is the only thing you should be working on in terms of new foods at this time, as we want to minimize stress during meals.
   2. See the attached handout for details on how to practice this.
6. **Managing tantrums around food:** We know that not having favorite foods may cause some children to act out. This is one of those times where you may not be able to accommodate them.
   1. Remain calm. Simply offer the choices that are available.
   2. Redirect them to other available activities, this is a good time to use technology.
   3. Redirect them to a safe place to calm down if they get very upset.
7. Please monitor you children for hydration. Continue to offer fluids throughout the day.
8. We recognize that children may eat less during this time. If foods drop out, or they become more tired and irritable due to lack of food please send us a message so we can problem solve with you.
9. If you are worried about dehydration or other medical concerns associated with not eating, please contact your child’s pediatrician.

Current Feeding Patients: Feel free to send a MyChart message to your providers with any questions about feeding concerns.

Other families with general questions about feeding, please send them to the Facebook page and we will monitor it and respond as we are able.

We are in this with you to help our children maintain their feeding concerns