

# Market Intelligence Digest

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## COVID-19 will Radically Change Specialized Nutrition

By Rick Miller

Food & Drink Associate Director for Specialized Nutrition

***The COVID-19 crisis will change society's approach to immune health as well as overall health, health monitoring, and personalized nutrition.***



## Mintel recommends

### COVID-19 pandemic brings future nutrition change

COVID-19 will affect specialized nutrition from multiple angles, influencing health supplement priorities, food sourcing, and a drive in health monitoring. Purchase behaviors will be driven by fearful millennials, and brands seeking to support the most vulnerable may create a better support structure for our ageing society.

### Develop another New Product Development (NPD) for immunity and chronic disease

Immunity-based products will have a continued demand post COVID-19, but current launches show few products are maximizing the opportunity to use this claim. The crisis has exposed vulnerable groups (e.g. diabetics) that need specialized products. In the event of no vaccines, immune-boosting herbal extracts will be in high demand.

### Elevated monitoring will expedite personalization

A society rehabilitating from social isolation and working from home will change demands for home air quality devices, electronic

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entertainment, and health monitoring. Brands should keep close watch on diagnostic technologies that will prevent, manage, and protect against future outbreaks and personalize nutritional health support.

## The COVID-19 pandemic will change nutrition in the future

The societal disruption and future economic impact of COVID-19 will change consumers' outlook on many aspects of health for a prolonged period, even when a vaccine is available. Despite witnessing two other major coronavirus epidemics in the past 20 years: SARS-CoV that originated in China in 2003 and MERS-CoV that began in Saudi Arabia in 2012, the role of nutrition in supporting physical, mental, and specifically, immune health will be paramount across all life stages moving ahead.

The role of specialized nutrition brands and their reactions to consumer outcry will shape the specialized nutrition category for the immediate and forthcoming future.

## Millennials will drive the specialized nutrition category post COVID-19

At present, UK consumers across life stages are living in a state of fear of infection from COVID-19, and reactive purchasing reins presently. Yet, looking ahead to when the pandemic is over, it is the millennials who will be leading the drive on specialized nutrition purchasing.

Millennials are far more influenced by trending news stories, and as a consequence, are more liable to make changes to their lifestyle than any other consumer groups. In fact, 46% of UK millennials say they have changed their lifestyle after seeing a news story about habits that may prevent future illnesses vs only 21% of UK seniors.

Brands should also consider other health trends of more interest to millennials such as air pollution, personalized diets through DNA testing, and mental health. Help to unify positioning and appeal to the 'health overhaul' that these consumers will be seeking post COVID-19.



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## COVID-19 will affect future specialized nutrition from multiple angles

### 1) Infection fear drives immune-boosting diets

Consumers may continue to bulk-buy health supplements due to fears of infection, even when a vaccine is available. For instance, UK online supplement retailer, Natural Dispensary, was closed due to panic buying and only opens when stocked.

### 2) No vaccine encourages botanical experimentation

While non-evidenced therapies, e.g. the 'miracle mineral solution' (that contains household bleach) will emerge during the period with no vaccine and should be avoided; consumers may be more willing to try botanical ingredients with health benefits.

### 3) Chronic disease risk promotes personalization

Health authorities highlighted that associated health issues, such as diabetes puts consumers in a higher risk category. This could encourage health biometric testing and opting for personalized supplementation to optimize health post-crisis.

### 4) Consumers will favor heroic, moralistic brands

Many brands are offering to change production to support the crisis, such as foods for special medical purposes (FSMP) brand Abbott Laboratories ramping up production of FDA-approved COVID-19 testing kits. These brands are set to profit in the loyalty stakes after the pandemic.

## Develop immunity products for the most vulnerable to COVID-19

Brands should consider NPD with immunity positioning to groups most at risk such as seniors, pregnant, nursing mothers, and those with long-term diseases such as diabetes.



Source: Mintel GNPD (Maternal); Mintel GNPD (Seniors); Mintel GNPD (Diabetes)



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## Watch out for future technologies that may help consumers detect viral infections faster, improve resilience, and recover quicker.

Diagnostics on the horizon could help consumers monitor key biometrics, detect disease early, and make suggestions to improve lifestyle and nutrition to support recovery.

### Breathalyzer for disease

Owlstone Medical make volatile organic compound detection devices and non-invasive approaches to early disease detection using exhaled breath. This technology has been used to detect influenza in animals and could be used in future testing.

### Futuristic contact lens

Mojo Vision are creating a smart contact lens that provides real-time notifications, biometric monitoring, and vision enhancement. This non-invasive technology could be used to monitor infected eyes as an early warning of viral infection.

### Stress hormone detection

Caltech university have created technology for real-time, monitoring of sweat cortisol. Cortisol is a stress response hormone and in excessive amounts, it can suppress the immune system. In wearables, it could help consumers counter stress.



Photo by ThisIsEngineering from Pexels

## The opportunity

There is no escaping that COVID-19 will change consumers' approach to health. In the short term, to preserve immune function and protection against viruses or even mitigate the infection risk due to long-term conditions, brands should follow closely the changes in consumer responses to the crisis and respond with effective nutrition solutions, personalized to their current, and ideally future, needs. The unintended positive consequence will be a renewed confidence in the morality of brands based on their support in the crisis and protection of vulnerable groups; this may set a precedent for our future generation that may have to deal with similar crises again.

Read full report: <https://clients.mintel.com/insight/covid-19-will-radically-change-specialised-nutrition>