

Buckwheat and Condoms: 5 Things Russians Are Buying in Pandemic

By [AFP](#)

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Russians, long used to financial and political crises, are reacting to the coronavirus by bulk-buying the essentials for life in isolation. **Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency**

Russians, long used to financial and political crises, are reacting to the coronavirus pandemic by bulk-buying the essentials for life in isolation — including condoms.

Here are five things they are stocking up on:

Buckwheat

Buckwheat — or *grechka*, as it is known locally — is a staple food in Russia and can be eaten both as a side dish or a main course.

The grain-like seeds, cooked like rice, are also a barometer of Russia's economic fears and become especially sought after in times of crisis.

The outbreak of the coronavirus and the announcement of preventive measures in Moscow triggered a run on grocery stores and online supermarkets.

Russians snapped up buckwheat and salt, even though authorities have warned against panic buying.

On March 9-15, sales of buckwheat jumped 66% compared to the same period last year, according to market research company Nielsen Russia.

Sex toys

Sales of condoms and sex toys have spiked in Russia as many people are already self-isolating or preparing to.

In March Ozon, one of Russia's biggest online retailers, reported a 300% spike in sales of sex toys and condoms.

Demand peaked on March 14-17 when many companies ordered employees to prepare work from home. Sales of condoms and lubricants jumped 147% and 124% respectively compared to the same period last year, Ozon said.

All kinds of lingerie and fantasy outfits were also in high demand, with sales of nurse costumes more than doubling year on year.

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Electronics

Sales of consumer electronics have also soared, mainly because of the tumbling ruble which has lost a fifth of its value this year due to the coronavirus outbreak and falling oil prices.

The depreciating ruble will lead to higher inflation in the coming months so Russians are rushing to snap up imported electronics such as mobile phones and laptops at current prices.

The need to self-isolate and set up a home office was another factor boosting sales of electronics.

The uncertainty has also increased demand for baseball bats, with sales jumping nearly 30% this month, according to OFD Platform, a fiscal data operator.

Baseball is not widely played in Russia, so this is presumably for self-defense purposes.

Freezers

Many Russians are also investing in extra cold storage capacity as they stock up on food during the pandemic.

Sales of refrigerators and freezers have skyrocketed, with Ozon recording a fourfold growth in

March.

Garlic

Many in Russia believe in the potent anti-viral properties of garlic which has also been in demand recently.

The price for garlic — most of which comes from China — increased by 11% in February, according to state statistics agency Rosstat.

Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov also advised people to chew on some cloves to boost their immune system, saying: "Eat garlic and you will have pure blood."

In reality, garlic will not help prevent infection, the World Health Organization said.

"Garlic is a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties," it said.

"However, there is no evidence from the current outbreak that eating garlic has protected people from the new coronavirus."

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