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Leading a Healthy Lifestyle During Quarantine

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With the Coronavirus pandemic looming on us, a majority of people have been advised to stay home. So how do we make sure we lead a healthy lifestyle and stay active during this time of quarantine? Exercising at your neighborhood gym or community pool is also prohibited. As movement, quite literally, is grinding to a halt, how do we remain physically active and continue to add nutritious foods to your diet?

Eat for energy; managing your diet

Given what's available in the food supply, you should still be able to fill 1/4 of your plate with a protein source (remember, plant-based proteins, such as quinoa, work here too), 1/4 of the plate from whole grains and the rest with vegetables and little bit of fruit (frozen or canned work for each).

Don't forget about nuts, nut butters, seeds and legumes, too! They're shelf-stable, if stored properly, and provide protein, unsaturated fats and some electrolytes. You can easily add these to oatmeal, salads, other grain dishes such as brown/wild rice and quinoa or even smoothies.

One practice is to make your dishes and recipes in batches, and then freeze them to reduce food waste. Many recipes are more difficult to cut into smaller portions, so sometimes batch cooking is a more practical option; plus, you've done most of the work up-front and can reheat meals as the week progresses. You can also try freezing certain foods until you'll need them, such as breads, buns and rolls. The last thing you want is for your food to go to waste. As a backup, I would also suggest stocking up on some protein shakes, especially if meat supplies start to run low. It's an easy way to add a little protein to your diet!

Incorporating healthy foods into your diet during a quarantine scenario is probably more important than at any other time due to the drastic shift in our day-to-day activities. By being mandated to remain home, most of us will likely burn far fewer calories than we normally do simply by reducing our usual physical activity. You no longer have that walk from your car to the office, or those errands to run on Saturday morning and afternoon. Being isolated can also be lonely, and keeping up with a healthful diet is one way to combat signs and symptoms of depression. There is a huge connection between physical and emotional well-being, and when you feel good in one regard, it's much easier to feel good in the other.

Safety is of utmost importance, so I'd recommend frozen and/or canned fruits and vegetables. Frozen fruit and vegetables are close to fresh varieties because they require blanching or being 'shocked' in boiling water for at least two minutes prior to freezing in order to preserve as many nutrients as possible. With canned fruits and vegetables, be sure to rinse thoroughly to remove any excess sugar and sodium used during the canning and



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preservation process, and whenever you can, choose canned fruit in water rather than syrup. If you purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, be sure to wash them thoroughly. I'd also recommend freezing hard-boiled eggs. Additionally, try incorporating egg alternatives, such as egg beaters.

After purchasing meat, poultry or dairy, try freezing it right away and then thaw as you need it. Additionally, try not to overcrowd any one area of your fridge or freezer – too much food in that space can cause your foods to warm up and sit at unsafe temperatures. Try to ensure you have some airflow between your food items.

Get moving! It's important!

Regular exercise is a good way to manage and lower stress levels and keeping up with a workout routine might be even more important now to eliminate some of the mental stress you may be feeling. It's also important for us to make sure our immune systems are active and healthy in a time like this, and exercise is a big part of that.

If you're just getting started with exercise, in a normal situation, we would recommend that you surround yourself with those who share the same value. But we're not supposed to be around other people right now. I'd recommend following Twitter, Instagram and Facebook accounts of people who regularly exercise; surround your social media with people who live that active lifestyle. Join a Facebook group or page and engage with others on the kinds of workouts that they're doing. People can, for instance, add a running time or their mileage if they've gone on a run or input what they're doing in terms of strength training. These are little pieces of motivation that will hopefully encourage them to hop on that stationary bike or do yoga in the living room.

Get outside! Go on a hike, a walk, or a run. Enjoy the local trails. I always say that the best exercise is one that a person can do regularly and consistently. And being consistent is attainable if you find a workout program that you enjoy. If you enjoy walking, get out for a walk. If you're not walking now, it's a great way to start getting active. If you enjoy biking, jump on a bike – indoors or out. You can pull up a YouTube video of a yoga routine.

With many children being home from school, this is also a great time to introduce them to regular exercise. Find 30 minutes in the day to set aside for exercise. Obstacle courses are great, as are jumping jacks and pushups. Running around the cul-de-sac outside your home can also be fun. Make a game out of it!

Home workouts will become our new norm for a little while. Check out YouTube or Prime Video for body weight exercises such as air squats, pushups, planks/side planks, or even dance, yoga and Pilates videos. Meditation and relaxation techniques are especially important in a time like this. Consider ordering resistance bands, foam rollers, ab wheels or any other at-home equipment you could use to incorporate with body weight movements.

This could be a really good time to change up your exercise regimen and try something totally new!

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