Right now there are probably many of us thinking; “I am so over this COVID thing”. Trouble is, COVID-19 is not done with us, and chances are won’t be for a long time to come.

But the sun is still shining, the lawn still needs to be mowed and summer holidays are just around the corner, right? Isn’t it time we all just…go outside? Sadly, not yet. As you can imagine, there is a term for what many of us are feeling. It’s called “Quarantine Fatigue”.

Contributing psychologists at verywellmind.com explain that when COVID-19 first appeared, we were focused on staying safe and alive. And now that the immediate terror and urgency of the moment are beginning to recede. The actual numbers and the real science are no less concerning, but because we have done some accommodating psychologically to the fear we stop feeling it as intensely say psychologists. This leaves us with is a growing sense of non-productivity, repetitiveness, loss of many things of our old life plus the loss of excitement and newness in our day.

**We miss human connection.**

We also miss and crave contact with other people, especially since we are social creatures. While a few weeks of separation may have felt tolerable or even a welcome change, the social urges and needs are intensifying and we’re craving more human connection.

**Crisis mode is hard to maintain.**

As people’s awareness heightened about the virus, we went into crisis mode, developing a sense of urgency, anxiety, and quick decision making. But now the dust has settled and reality sets in. We are tired of it; quarantine fatigue.

We all experience quarantine fatigue differently, but one thing’s for sure, having healthy ways to cope is important for our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. For example, you could practice new forms of caring for yourself such as mindfulness meditation, yoga or journaling.

Be kind to yourself. If you are feeling overwhelmed or experiencing severe mood swings, talk to your doctor for help and advice.
Stay well while social distancing

It doesn’t matter if you are a parent with children or on your own, we know that during this period it’s really important that you look after your mental and emotional wellbeing as well as your physical health. Here are some reminders about staying well while social distancing:

1. Establish a daily routine, especially if you are social distancing with kids. Routines provide reassuring structure and purpose. Include a mix of learning, creative, physical and relaxation time and schedule time for ‘electronics’ if this is important for your child. Help your child make a visual timetable so everyone understands the plan.

2. Make time for physical activity. If you have kids, encourage playing in the backyard if you can and rediscover games such as croquet or lawn tennis. If you can’t get outside suggest your child makes an indoor obstacle course or follows an online exercise programme. There are also a multitude of free videos and fitness instructions online.

3. Balance your weekly routine so you have a good mix of work (activities that have to be done), rest and leisure.

4. Identify the triggers that make you feel low and look for ways to reduce or manage them.

5. Talk with family, friends and neighbours to help them understand how you feel and how they can help.

6. Take care of yourself. Eat and drink healthily with plenty of fruit, vegetables and water to support your immune function and energy levels.

7. Avoid staying still for too long. Exercise and regular movement will maintain fitness and strength. If you are working from home, take breaks and eat away from your “desk.”

8. Have a good sleep routine. If you are struggling, try avoiding tea and coffee in the late afternoon and evening, take a bath, using blackout curtains, listening to gentle music or deep breathing exercises.

9. Keep in touch. If you don’t feel like having chats with video or are unsure just how Facetime works, call someone the old fashioned way – the phone. Arrange chats with video or are unsure just how Facetime works, call someone the old fashioned way – the phone. Arrange to speak to someone most days, like a relative or a close friend.

Forget the rumours and look for facts

Trying to figure out the best way to deal with situations during the corona crisis? Here are a few tips to consider from the World Health Organisation:

1. COVID-19 has and is likely to affect people from many countries, in many geographical locations. When referring to people with COVID-19, do not attach the disease to any particular ethnicity or nationality. Be empathetic to all those who are affected, in and from any country. People who are affected by COVID-19 have not done anything wrong, and they deserve our support, compassion and kindness.

2. Minimize watching, reading or listening to news about COVID-19 that causes you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information only from trusted sources and mainly so that you can take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice.

3. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts; not rumours and misinformation. Gather information at regular intervals from local health authority platforms to help you distinguish facts from rumours. Facts can help to minimize fears.

4. Protect yourself and be supportive to others. Assisting others in their time of need can benefit both the person receiving support and the helper. For example, check by telephone on neighbours or people in your community who may need some extra assistance. Working together as one community can help to create solidarity in addressing COVID-19 together.
Start a new routine and stick to it

Just like trying to create a new habit, starting and sticking to a new routine takes some time and effort. And let’s face it, the Corona crisis has more or less forced us to start a new routine. The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have dramatically altered many people’s normal routines, which makes it that much harder to cope with the stress that you might be feeling.

Having a stable routine can help you feel more in control of the situation, explains the experts at PsychologyToday.ca. It allows you to focus on the things that are within your power to control.

A good place to start with creating a new routine is to set wake-up and bedtimes, as well as meal and activity times. The key is to create a routine that adds structure and a sense of predictability to your day. Your schedule may change somewhat depending on the day of the week, but sticking to a basic structure for when you will wake, eat, work, do activities, and sleep can help you feel less stressed out and more organized.

Structuring your day also ensures that you accomplish those basic tasks that must be done, which will leave you with the time to schedule in other things that you want or need to accomplish.

Here are a few more things you can make a part of your daily routine to help manage stress levels:

- Stay active and get regular daily exercise.
- Make sure that you are well-rested.
- Eat healthy meals on a regular schedule.
- Set realistic goals.
- Try to stay positive.
- Prepare for challenges and do not dwell on things you can’t control.
- Stay in touch with friends and family members.
- Set aside time for activities that you enjoy.

Sunshine pros and cons

Since many of us have time on our hands that we did not expect, it is small wonder that there are some beautiful lawns and gardens popping up all over the neighbourhood. It’s great to get outside, especially when the weather is warm and sunny. Feeling the warm sun usually makes us feel better, so it’s small wonder we want to get out in it.

But, unfortunately too much sun is not a good thing in the long term. The sun gives off rays of light that can help and harm us. These are known as ultraviolet (UV) rays. There are three different types of UV rays: UVA, UVB, and UVC.

UVA rays are the most common form of sun exposure. UVB rays make up less sun exposure, but are more intense. UVC rays are the worst. Luckily, we are not at risk of UVC rays. The earth’s ozone layer blocks these rays.

Even though you can’t see UV rays, they can go through your skin. The outer layer of skin is the epidermis. The inner layer is called the dermis. Your nerves and blood vessels are located in the dermis. Epidermis cells contain a pigment (or dye) called melanin. Melanin protects our skin and also creates vitamin D. When your body defends itself against UV rays, your skin tans or darkens. Too much sun exposure or sunburn can cause skin cells to die, damage, or develop cancer.

However, for optimal health, you’ll need sufficient quantities of vitamin D. One of the best and most efficient ways to get vitamin D is to spend time in the sun. So how do you get sufficient sun exposure, while at the same time ensure you aren’t overexposed to the damaging effects of the sun?

Sun exposure increases your body’s natural production of vitamin D. When the sun touches your skin, it skin cells and the sun stimulates your body to produce this essential vitamin, which also happens to function as a hormone.

Like all things in life, balance is key. Go ahead and take in about 20 minutes of sunshine daily. Take the necessary precautions to protect yourself, from the harmful aspects of the sun, such as wearing a hat, sunglasses and using sunscreen, but be sure to enjoy yourself outside.

UV Index

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Tips for avoiding weight gain when you’re at home

Stick to a schedule
When you’re working from home, there really is no schedule or routine. And without one, you run the risk of an “anything goes” approach to meals.
Try sticking to an eating schedule similar to the one you’d have if you worked outside of the house. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner can be eaten at certain times, and if you’re going to snack, limit the number and try to schedule those, too.

Substitute some snacks
If you’re not getting out to the store much, you’re probably stocking up on non-perishables. And non-perishables tend to be the calorie-dense, processed stuff your body doesn’t really need.
As difficult as it may be, you could try to substitute one such snack a day for a healthier one. Ditch the chips for some air-popped popcorn, or switch out the candy bar for a handful of almonds.

Replace your commute
If you used to spend 30 minutes each way on a commute to work, you have an extra hour per day when you’re working from home. Instead, you could take an hour walk per day (or two 30-minute walks), or you could ride your bike.

Go online
When fewer people are going to gyms or recreation facilities, the community aspect of fitness can be lost. And for some, the social part of exercise is one of the things that’s motivational. Others want personal instruction.
But you can participate in group workouts from home and get personal training online. There are a ton of videos out there to help guide you through bodyweight workouts, cardio, and even weightlifting. But you might also be able to find - or start - interactive exercise through live streaming platforms. You don’t necessarily have to be on your own when it comes to your fitness.

Foods that add protein to your diet

Protein is the key to building muscle, yet athletes can’t live on meat and protein shakes alone. These seven foods add protein and needed variety to a diet to help fitness enthusiasts gain muscle quickly.

1. Nuts and seeds
Nuts and seeds offer a hefty dose of protein along with good fats. The wide variety of nuts and seeds allows you to add versatility and flavor to snacks, salads, and other dishes. A couple of handfuls of nuts will sharpen your focus, sate your appetite, and bump up your daily protein intake.

2. Legumes
Like nuts, legumes offer protein and variety to your diet. Legumes such as chickpeas, lentils, black beans, or kidney beans complement a wide variety of cuisines.

3. Nut Butter
Peanut butter may be the best-known nut butter, but sunflower and almond butter taste great, too. Dip apple slices in nut butter for a healthy snack.

4. Quinoa
In recent years, quinoa has become popular for its nutty flavor and versatility. Cooked quinoa makes a heartier alternative to oatmeal or other cooked cereals. The grain can substitute for rice, pasta, or potatoes.

5. Avocado
Avocados are full of good fats, vitamins, and minerals, but they are also packed with protein. A few avocado slices can turn anything from basic toast to a simple salad into a luxurious meal.

6. Chia seeds
Chia seeds gel when exposed to liquid. Two tablespoons of this ancient seed can turn fresh juice into a thick smoothie or nut milk into a protein-rich pudding. This makes chia seeds the perfect pantry staple for those who want a bit of protein in their desserts or smoothies.
The upper back area is one of the most common sources of pain in the body. The shoulders, neck, and back all are problem spots for millions of people. While upper back pain is fortunately not nearly as likely as lower back pain to be caused by a serious health issue, the soreness and stiffness that result can still make life miserable.

Here are several practical ways to deal with this unpleasant problem.

Practice good posture. In modern society many people spend most of their time sitting. These long hours of sedentary living will result in serious upper back pain if proper posture is not followed. A comfortable chair with proper back support is needed. A person should sit so that their feet are level with the floor and their head is in vertical alignment with their hips. Hunched-over shoulders must absolutely be avoided. Standing up for a few minutes at least every hour is wise.

Work out. Stronger muscles are more capable of dealing with the demands that life places on them. Muscles that are too weak will become strained and develop painful adhesions. Good posture becomes impossible to maintain consistently if muscles in the shoulder and upper back are inadequate. Bodyweight exercises, free weights, and weight machines can all be helpful in strengthening the upper back.

Use a smart phone properly. Modern society has become even less upper back-friendly in recent years. The issue is the ubiquity of smart phone that has led to a condition informally known as text neck. Most people crane their neck forward while using their phone. This position disrupts the natural curve of the neck and places enormous strain on muscles, resulting in pain. The solution is to both take more frequent breaks and reduce overall usage. During use, the phone should be held relatively far away from the body to reduce craning.

Stretch. Stress and pressure can build up over time in the upper back muscles. The neck is especially likely to become tense and stiff. Stretching is one of the best ways to relieve stiffness. A good stretch elongates the muscle, thereby serving to restore range of motion and reduce pain. Any sort of stretch that targets the neck and surrounding areas can be useful in fighting upper back pain. Yoga is a good source for helpful stretches.

Get a massage. Getting a massage is one of the best ways to relieve upper back pain, particularly since massage therapists are specifically trained in dealing with the sources of muscle pain. Muscles can develop adhesions (also called knots) over time. A knotted muscle becomes stuck, unable to relax, resulting in loss of function as well as pain. The application of deep pressure to the muscle (as in a massage) causes it to release, dissolving the painful knot.

Cabbage: By far the longest-lasting vegetable, a head of cabbage can last up to six months when stored in the crisper drawer in your refrigerator. Just remove any wilted outer leaves before cooking. Shredded cabbage is great in soups and slaws, and cabbage wedges can be roasted or grilled.

Brussels Sprouts: Although they’re a close cousin of cabbage, Brussels sprouts won’t last quite as long. They will stay fresh, however, for up to two weeks when stored in plastic in the refrigerator. If you can find Brussels sprouts on the stalk, grab them—they last slightly longer than loose Brussels sprouts.

Apples: Apples can easily last for months in your refrigerator, and they are the perfect healthy snack. If you’re stocking up on apples, make sure to store them away from other fruits and vegetables, since they emit ethylene gas that causes other produce to spoil more quickly. Apples are great in sweet and savory dishes, but you can never go wrong with apple pie.

Potatoes: All potato varieties, including yams and sweet potatoes, do well when they’re stored in a cool, dark place with plenty of ventilation. Your potatoes will last up to three months if you store them in an uncovered bowl or bag with air holes. Wash them just before using, then bake them, roast them, or mash them.

Carrots: Carrots can last for a month in the refrigerator, but the key to extending their shelf life is removing the leafy tops. If they’re left on, the leaves will continue to draw moisture out of the carrots and cause them to go bad much more quickly. Store carrots in the crisper drawer, wash them just before using, then try roasting them, pureeing them in soup, or snacking on them raw.
Helpful tips for optimizing your living space

(NC) Protecting our health has never been more important. During this difficult time, we’ll take whatever precautions necessary to protect ourselves and our families from the dangers of the coronavirus. Every little bit helps, and that includes maintaining a healthy home environment.

So, what are some of the ways you can keep your home healthy?

Change your furnace filter
How often you need to change your filter depends on what kind of furnace you have. A clean filter improves your home’s air quality. When the filter is clogged, it’s no longer able to catch dust, mold spores, pollen, dander and other kinds of dirt from the air. A dirty filter also makes your furnace work harder to blow out heat, raising your energy bill. Replacing your filter regularly keeps your furnace in tip-top shape and allows it to operate as efficiently as possible. Review your manual to ensure you buy the proper filter type and size for your unit and follow the replacement schedule. Clean and test all air exhaust systems, too.

Clean your home regularly
In addition to maintaining your furnace, regular dusting and vacuuming can aid in the removal of allergens and dust and help keep them out of your lungs. This includes vacuuming air ducts and vents. Be sure to remove the covers to thoroughly vacuum them.

Spinach gets top marks

We asked Google what is considered the number one superfood food in the world and the answer was . . . spinach! As Popeye would say...“Shiver me timbers!” Nutritionists from medicalnewstoday.com explain why:

This nutrient-dense green superfood is readily available - fresh, frozen or even canned. One of the healthiest foods on the planet, spinach is packed with energy while low in calories, and provides Vitamin A, Vitamin K, and essential folates.

Spinach is thought to have originated about 2000 years ago in ancient Persia from which it was introduced to India and ancient China via Nepal in 647 AD as the “Persian vegetable”. In AD 827, the Saracens introduced spinach to Sicily. Spinach is considered a superfood because it is loaded with tons of nutrients in a low-calorie package. Dark, leafy greens like spinach are important for skin, hair, and bone health. They also provide protein, iron, vitamins, and minerals.

One easy way to enjoy spinach is to sauté with onion and add to an omelet for an easy, healthy meal. Yum!

Places to find some new ideas for supper

Is “take out” starting to wear thin, but you really have no new ideas about what to cook for dinner? Here are a few of our favourite websites for discovering new dishes to prepare for dinner:

Canada.ca

Believe it or not, Health Canada has some pretty great recipes on its website. This site covers everything from healthy breakfasts to lunches and dinners. A personal fave: cheesy broccoli toast.

Taste of Home

“Even though you’re staying at home, you don’t need to get stuck in a cooking rut,” states this website. From pizza potato toppers to Salsa Steak Garlic toasts, this site is bound to have a recipe of two you have not tried before.

Chicken.ca
https://www.chicken.ca/chicken-school/cat/15/cooped-up

This website has put together a comprehensive section of ways to prepare chicken and other fun things to do while you are “cooped up”, including an “around the world” guide to prepare chicken. Chicken Korma anyone?

Foodnetwork.ca
https://www.foodnetwork.ca/everyday-cooking/photos/all-time-best-vegetarian-recipes/#!Slow-Cooker-Sweet-Potato-Enchiladas

Looking for some new vegetarian cooking ideas? Check out this website. The link will take you two slow cooker sweet potato enchiladas. We have it on good authority that these are delicious!