During this time of crisis, being a “good neighbour” has never been so important. We have been told time and again by experts, health care professionals and government officials that the best way to get through this pandemic is together. We can do it, especially when we look out for one another.

Perhaps you know someone who is alone and needs a little bit more support, or maybe you have a friend who you know is going through a rough time at home and is now forced to face his or her situation every day. Being told to stay in under these circumstances can have serious consequences for someone.

It’s possible to be a good neighbour while social distancing. Technology has come a long way, allowing us to stay connected with those near and far without ever leaving the safety of home.

Check in.
This could be especially impactful for your elderly or otherwise vulnerable neighbours. They may not be able to run important errands such as getting groceries and medications, or they may be emotionally fragile and might benefit from a friendly check-in from time to time. If you become aware of an escalated domestic violence situation, seek help to see what can be done. Check online for resources in your community.

Shop online, shop local.
Many small businesses are struggling to stay afloat. When ordering your groceries, food delivery or other items online, consider buying from a local business.

Give what you can.
Many local homeless shelters, food banks, animal shelters and other non-profits are still operating, so consider donating extra supplies or money if you can spare it. If you’ve already paid in advance for piano lessons, dance classes or a child’s school excursion, rather than requesting a refund, consider leaving that money with the organization/service provider as a donation instead.

Stay informed.
Don’t get swallowed up by all the doom and gloom, and ensure you’re getting your news from credible sources.

Practice good hygiene.
Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer. Cough and sneeze into your sleeve. Tissues are a single-use item, and don’t touch your face! Clean frequently touched surfaces and of course, maintain a safe distance if you must be in contact with anyone.
How processed is your food?

But are all processed foods created equal?

To better understand processed foods, a classification system called NOVA was developed by an international panel of food scientists and researchers, splitting foods into different categories:

Unprocessed or minimally processed foods: Think vegetables, grains, legumes, fruits, nuts, meats, seafood, herbs, spices, garlic, eggs and milk. Make these real, whole foods the basis of your diet.

Processed foods: When ingredients such as oil, sugar or salt are added to foods and they are packaged, the result is processed foods. Examples are simple bread, cheese, tofu and canned tuna or beans. They are convenient and help you build nutritious meals.

Ultra-processed foods: Almost half of our calories come from ultra-processed foods. They go through multiple processes, contain many added ingredients and are highly manipulated. Examples are pop, chips, chocolate, sweetened breakfast cereals, packaged soups, chicken nuggets, hotdogs and fries.

Staying away from ultra-processed foods and eating a balanced diet focused on whole foods will help prevent chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke and obesity. Find out more at heartandstroke.ca.

Which fruits should you eat if you want to lose weight?

Substituting high-calorie foods with fruits can make it easier for you to lose weight. Not only are fruits low in calories, but they also make you feel fuller than other types of snacks. Fruits can be eaten alone, added to cereal, or tossed with a salad.

Here is a look at several fruits that make good choices if you want to lose a few pounds.

Apples

Apples provide a good source of fibre. They allow you to feel full after eating them, making it easier to avoid extra snacking. Apples are also low in calories. Since so many different varieties of apples exist, it should be easy to find a type that you enjoy eating.

Melons

As with most fruits, melons are low in calories. They are rich in fibre as well. Melons offer a high water content, allowing you to eliminate waste more readily.

Kiwi

Although kiwis contain a fair amount of sugar, they are also full of fibre. Since they are small, you may find that you need to eat two kiwis in order to feel full.

Bananas

Whether you top your cereal with a sliced banana or eat it one bite at a time, you should feel full afterward. Ripe bananas do contain more sugar than other fruits but not so much as to make you gain weight.

Stone Fruits

Fruits with a pit in their middle are known as stone fruits. This group includes flavourful fruits such as apricots, nectarines, plums, peaches, and cherries. Each of these fruits is low in calories, making them ideal choices for anyone looking to lose weight.

Oranges

Although oranges are juicy, they do contain lots of fibre. Oranges are also low in calories.
Six essential tips for working out in the morning

Exercising in the morning can be challenging. If you find this to be true for you, here are a few tips:

1. Get enough sleep.
Exercising in the morning may involve getting up earlier, which can result in a shortchange of sleep. Try to avoid having this happen. Working out on insufficient sleep is not a sustainable habit either. Start going to bed earlier the night before if necessary.

2. Prepare.
Psychological inertia can be difficult to overcome. Preparing for your workout as much as possible the night before will make it much easier to get started exercising when morning comes. For example, you could lay out your gym clothes and shoes, or plan your running route before heading to bed.

Fight your urge to stay in bed by keeping your body in motion. Don’t sit down and definitely don’t remain lying in bed. Movement naturally increases alertness, so your desire for rest will dissipate quicker than you think.

After a night’s sleep, the body is dehydrated. Experiencing dehydration during exercise is not good, as it both reduces performance and makes exercise miserable. You should take in some liquids immediately after waking up.

5. Follow a routine.
Following the same routine each morning will eventually turn it into a solid habit. Eventually, your routine will make morning exercise seem natural.

6. Focus on the benefits.
Remembering why you are forcing yourself out of your warm, comfortable bed to exercise can be hard. Recalling why this habit is worth embracing will help. Working out naturally raises mood, thus providing a fantastic natural boost to your day. Exercising early in the day also ensures you won’t end up skipping your workout entirely and lose out on the incredible health benefits exercise provides.
If your pantry is almost empty and your freezer is running low, you may have no choice but to go to the grocery store. Here are some smart shopping safety tips for the current era.

- **Explore alternatives.** If you are worried about being in a crowd of people, ask yourself if you really need to go out. Think about having your groceries delivered, or picking them up at the curb instead.

- **Leave the family at home.** If you must go to the grocery store, leave the family at home. The fewer people who are potentially exposed the better, so do your shopping on your own.

- **Get in and out fast.** Now is not the time to linger at the grocery store, so get in, get what you need and get out as quickly as possible. Make sure you keep the required distance, two metres or two arms length from other shoppers.

- **Bring sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizer.** Grocery cart handles can be magnets for germs, so sanitize the handle before you start shopping. Many grocery stores now provide antimicrobial wipes, but it never hurts to bring your own. Also make sure you have hand sanitizer with you, and use it often as you shop.

- **Avoid touching items you do not intend to buy.** If you want to avoid getting and spreading germs, keep your hands to yourself. Touch only the items you plan to purchase, and then move them to your cart as quickly as possible.

- **Reusable bag hygiene.** If you intend to use bags you bring from home, make sure they are thoroughly washed, and bag your groceries yourself.

- **Wipe down boxes before you bring your groceries into the house.** Use sanitizing wipes to clean boxes and bags before you put them in the freezer, fridge or pantry.

- **Leave shelf-stable foods in the garage, spare room or basement for a day or two.** If you do not need the items right away, leave them outside your home for a few days to kill any lingering viruses. Be sure to bring refrigerated items in right away and clean them carefully; you do not want to run the risk of foodborne illness.

- **Wash produce thoroughly.** You should always wash your produce, but you might want to be extra vigilant until the current pandemic has passed.

(Ref) They grab them on the go, use them to quench their thirst, or sneak one between games, but sugary drinks have little or no health benefits for kids – just health risks.

Sugary drinks are the greatest contributor to sugar in our diets and a significant factor for overweight and obesity, as well as several chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and cancer.

The recommended daily limit of calories from sugar is about 12 teaspoons, or 10 percent of our calories from sugar in one day. But sugary drinks will quickly get you past that amount. One can of pop (355 millilitres) includes 10 teaspoons of sugar.

Young people consume the most sugary drinks. The average youth drinks 578 millilitres of sugary drinks each day, which can contain up to 16 teaspoons or 64 grams of sugar.

Other examples of sugary drinks are energy and sports drinks, flavoured water, flavoured coffees and teas, flavoured dairy products, fruits drinks and 100 percent juice, which may include even more sugar than pop.

“The best beverage choice for any type of hydration is water,” says Carol Dombrow, RD and nutrition consultant with Heart & Stroke.

Find out more at heartandstroke.ca.
Maybe you’ve developed a cough or you’ve noticed some shortness of breath. While it could be any number of things, it’s not unusual for you to wonder if you have contracted COVID-19. But don’t panic! There are other possible explanations that have nothing to do with the outbreak at all. It’s a time of year when both the common cold and seasonal allergies are widespread.

According to public health officials, common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever.
- Dry coughing.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Digestive symptoms such as diarrhea.
- Pneumonia in both lungs (which would be seen on a chest X-ray).
- Losing senses of taste and smell (noted in some patients)
- Weakness.
- Exhaustion.

Symptoms of seasonal allergies include:

- Sneezing.
- Runny nose.
- Coughing.
- Itchy eyes.

If a fever isn’t present and you’re not showing signs of difficulty breathing or diarrhea, then you’re likely dealing with a common cold or seasonal allergies. While sneezing is often associated with both allergies and a cold, there are other symptoms that can help you differentiate. For example, usually a cold doesn’t have itchy eyes.

One overlapping symptom could be the decreased sense of smell. Anosmia, the sudden loss of smell, has been reported as a common marker of COVID-19 and if your nose is congested from allergies, it will also be hard to smell anything. You can differentiate this by the mucus fluid. COVID-19 patients who’ve lost their sense of smell reported no nasal obstruction or rhinorrhea (runny nose), whereas people with allergies will likely have runny nose.

If your symptoms align more with COVID-19, call your doctor. Do not take chances and wait.

**The #1 best thing you can do for your health**

(NG) We all want to lead fuller, healthier lives. There are many things that will help, like getting regular exercise, eating more fruits and veggies, getting better sleep and making time for meditation. But did you know that if you currently smoke, the best thing you can do for your health is give up smoking?

Quitting can be one of the hardest things you’ll ever do, but it’s well worth the effort, even if you only smoke every now and again. Did you know that all tobacco cigarettes carry significant risks to your health? There is no such thing as a safe cigarette – the burning of a cigarette releases over 7,000 chemicals, over 70 of which cause cancer. People who smoke are exposed to toxic chemicals, including tar, hydrogen cyanide, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and benzene. These harmful chemicals can cause a number of diseases, like lung cancer, heart disease and emphysema.

The only way to reduce your risk from smoking-related diseases is to avoid tobacco smoke. In fact, quitting smoking provides health benefits for everyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or lifestyle. The health benefits of quitting smoking even start within 20 minutes of your last cigarette.

Health Canada says there are many options to help quit, like counselling, self-help books, nicotine replacement therapies, medications, and other less harmful sources of nicotine. The cravings and withdrawal symptoms will pass – they are only temporary – soon you will feel better than ever.

The key to success is creating a quit plan and sticking to it. The quit process involves educating yourself, understanding your triggers and having a plan to overcome them. If you slip up, learn from your mistakes and get back on track. Learn more and find helpful resources at canada.ca/tobacco.
Take a moment for appreciation

COVID-19, which is forcing almost all of us to adapt to a different daily routine, also offers the gift of time for reflection. According to experts and Psychology Today, you can use this experience to clarify what’s important in your life and to ready yourself to move on after COVID-19 stronger, calmer, and clearer than before.

The prospect of serious illness reminds us to be thankful for our health and other blessings like family and friends. Seeing others struggle with illness can inspire us to better care for our bodies and appreciate more—and judge less—our physical capacities. Appreciate the various aspects of your life such as the opportunity to spend more time at home with your family. Here are a few other ideas for making the most of this situation:

Think about the many things you have to be thankful for by practicing a short (5-minute) meditation. Not comfortable with meditation? Then try just sitting quietly for five minutes by a window. Look outside and listen for the sounds of nature. With less cars on the roads and planes in the air, you will be amazed at the birdsongs you will hear. Just take this time to listen and appreciate.

Write down 10 things you are grateful for throughout the day—perhaps keep them in a note on your phone or in a journal. Pausing to notice and write down what you are grateful for in the moment is a great way to practice mindfulness, too!

Thank someone you appreciate. Take the time to video chat with a loved one and offer them an emotional connection, which is as important for our health as exercise and diet.

Healthy superfood salad

Superfoods are certain foods that offer superior nutritional benefits to other foods because they are rich sources of important vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

One of the best ways to to get a healthy dose of a variety of super foods is to toss them into a salad. The following healthy superfood salad from theharvestkitchen.com is loaded with curly kale, crunchy broccoli slaw, cabbage, shaved brussel sprouts, apples and sunflower seeds, as well as protein-dense quinoa, small bites of beets and chewy dried cranberries.

Superfood salad recipe

- 1 cup Kale
- 3/4 cup Cooked beets
- 3/4 cup Broccoli slaw
- 3/4 Purple cabbage
- 3/4 cup cooked red quinoa
- 3/4 cup Apple
- 1/2 cup Dried Cranberries
- 1/2 Sunflower seeds

Try it with a tasty lime vinaigrette!

Productive things to do in your free time

Sometimes it can be hard to expand our horizons and break out of our routine, but these days we don’t have much of a choice. Here are some helpful ideas to help fill up some of the free time we find ourselves with:

Take an interesting online class.

Learning a new skill exercises new parts of your brain while supporting your personal and professional development. Try something relaxing, like a painting class or yoga. Or try learning how to use a new web application or speak a second language.

Start a blog.

Even if you’re not a strong writer, creating a blog can help you improve your grammar, communication style and written skills. It can also help you explore topics of interest and teach you to organize and express your knowledge in a clear, engaging way.

Volunteer.

There are so many important social and charitable causes worthy of your time and attention, especially now. Do some research to find an organization in your community that works on something you feel passionate about and that offers volunteer shifts you can fit into your schedule.

Try crafts, even if you are not so crafty.

There are lots of sites online that can help even the most-craft challenged create something. From tassel pillows to a succulent garden to crayon art, just take a spin on the Internet and see what you can find.