



Maintaining Physical Health during COVID-19 Quarantine

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Balancing our lives during COVID-19 lockdowns can be trickier than we might've first imagined. What used to keep us balanced, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually before has completely changed. We need to find a new equilibrium.

Let's take a look at physical health during a lock down, when the 4, 8...16... walls of your home feel so limiting. How can we stay physically healthy when we are confined to a small living space?

Here's some ideas:



Get good sleep – All of us have experienced feeling discouraged when going to bed at night only to awaken with a brighter perspective. A good night's rest can change our outlook and give us the energy we need to face a new day. But there's even more to sleep than meets the closed eye! 😊 Sleeping well helps regulate hormones in the body, such as leptin and grellin, that affect you the whole day, helping you to stay in control of your choices, your appetite, and your exercise. To sleep well, put your electronics aside an hour before bedtime. Do something relaxing (bath, journaling, reading...) and choose to give God your concerns before laying your head on the pillow. Psalm 4:8 *"I will lie down and sleep peacefully, for you, Lord, make me safe and secure."*



Avoid Sweets – When we feel stressed, anxious or bored, it's easy to reach for foods that are tasty and addictive. For our immune systems—our body's first line of defense against illness—we need to avoid refined sugar like the plague! White sugar diminishes the fighting ability of the white blood cells and this suppression can last for days. Sugar becomes addictive quickly and we want more and more of it. The blood sugar high and then low can also cause emotional swings and hormonal imbalance. The culprit is not the sweet taste alone, since there are many naturally sweet foods that are okay. Good for you sweets include dates, fruits (fresh and dried), small amounts of bee honey, stevia, erythritol, etc. Experiment with recipes online that are plentiful and very good! An easy ice cream recipe is: 4 frozen bananas, 2 Tbsp. nut butter, 1 C sliced strawberries, ½ tsp. vanilla. Blend to yummy perfection!



Enjoy Sunlight – Vitamin D is known as the "sunshine vitamin" and is crucial to our overall health. Just 20 minutes in the sunlight daily can be enough for most bodies to create the Vit. D we need, even on a cloudy day, though it will probably take a little more exposure at those times. Vitamin D helps improve brain function, lowers blood pressure, protects against inflammation and even kills bacteria and viruses. Airing out your home and letting sunlight shine in can increase the healthfulness of your environment and help your attitude feel sunnier at the same time! (Note, be careful during

the midday hours not to overexpose, since the sun's rays are more direct and strong at that time. Wear sunscreen if you plan to be under the sun all day, especially during the hours of 10am-4pm.)



Avoid "Sitting Disease" – You may have heard this term which refers to spending most of 8 or more hours sitting during the day. This is easy to do during a lockdown, especially if you find yourself engrossed by your book or computer screen. Sitting is now known to be as bad for us as smoking, causing an increase in diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers and all cause mortality. To avoid this problem, it is important to move every hour, at least taking 250 steps. This can be done in just 3 minutes of jogging in place!



Exercise – Much more than just moving occasionally, the body needs aerobic movement for total health. This can lift the mood, give you energy and keep your immune functioning alive and well. Find an exercise you like to do and plan it into your schedule every day. If you like to be outdoors, you may need to find a new exercise that works indoors for a while. For ideas, try the "Scientific 7" available on-line and through a free app that, in the Full Body workout, guides through 12 exercises in 7 minutes, 50 seconds. This can be repeated for the length of exercise time you want. Many other programs are available online, but you can also adopt the practice of "house walking" (self-explanatory) which is becoming a real thing now.



Eat the rainbow – The more colors of fruits and vegetables we can work into our diets the better our nutrition and antioxidant intake to help our immune systems work their best. Every cell in the body needs nourishment to work properly and the additional fiber will keep our guts healthy too! A happy gut and body makes us feel good and better able to handle whatever needs our attention that day. Now that you have more time, shop for foods based on color (you can probably have them delivered), try new fruits or vegetables you haven't tried before, experiment with healthy food combinations like hummus and any vegetable, muhammara and whole grain crackers, kale or other new greens blended into a smoothie.



Avoid eating junk – After a food is processed and the fiber removed, there is often nothing valuable left. Dr. Gregor (author of *How Not to Die*), refers to junk food as Calorie Rich and Processed foods (with appropriate acronym). Anything that has been processed through machines may not be a whole food with its God-given nutrients anymore. This may feed our bodies, but still leave them crying for nutrients. When we are under stress, our bodies use from their store of antioxidants and need replenishment from real, whole foods. Plan your meals around more whole grains, multi-cereal foods, legumes, nuts, seeds and of course, fruits and vegetables. For an idea, try combining a cooked grain, plant protein by using a cooked grain, plant protein (legume, tofu, chickpeas...), vegetables (greens, shredding carrots, cooked veggies of any kind, etc...) and dressing that ties them together. A favorite dressing is ¼ C. tahini, juice of 1 lemon, 2+ Tbsp garlic powder, dash of salt, water to make as liquidy as you like (adjust seasonings as needed).