

You Can Take Care of Yourself in Coronavirus Quarantine or Isolation, Starting Right Now

Six things you can do right at this moment, along with some simple exercise equipment to get for your house.

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“Trying to preserve some sense of normalcy is really important for people’s well-being,” said Dr. Russell G. Buhr, a pulmonologist at U.C.L.A. Health. Maintaining a routine, he said, like getting up and getting dressed and doing what you usually do, can positively affect mental health.

“And good mental health promotes good physical health,” he added.

But there’s more to do. Dani Johnson, a physical therapist at the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program, encourages people who are staying home to get creative. “Every little bit of movement counts,” she said. “So when we’re confined to our home, move, move, move.”

You don’t need fancy equipment or a lot of time; you just need to weave exercise into your schedule.

The American Heart Association recommends adults engage in at least 150 minutes (two and a half hours) per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity. A combination of both would work too, preferably spread throughout the week.

Let’s start with six things you can do every day to maintain your physical and mental health if you’re isolating at home.

Right now, start bringing movement into tiny moments

Next time you watch a TV show, get up and do some squats during the commercials, Ms. Johnson said. Do heel raises when you’re washing dishes. Do side lunges when you’re throwing clothes in the dryer.

Knock out some push-ups when you’re waiting for a pot of water to boil. Dancing is also a great way to move your body. Turn on some music and boogie with your partner or children.

Improvise for tools — they’re all around you

There are ways to add resistance even when lacking proper gym equipment. Ms. Johnson recommends tossing cans of food in a bag: “Suddenly, that becomes a weight for you.”

Come up with games you can play with children. Anything where you’re crawling, jumping and skipping could work. “If you have stuff in your house and you have a body, you’ve got a great exercise tool,” she said. (You can read more about how to get strong here.)

Get your heart rate up, multiple times a day

“Stairs can be your cardiovascular best friend,” Ms. Johnson said. If you have access to stairs in your home or apartment, going up and down those stairs is a great way to get your blood pumping.

For a great full-body home workout, you can do an entire circuit sequence for up to 30 to 45 minutes. If you are working movement into your daily tasks, she also suggests creating more activity while doing things you already need to get done. For example, if you're carrying laundry upstairs, take an extra lap or two up and down the stairs to work in extra steps. "Every little bit counts toward a healthier you," Ms. Johnson said.

Dr. I-Min Lee, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, recommends simple fitness exercises like marching in place, doing jumping jacks or jogging in place with high knees.

**Get out and walk, even for
Just 15 minutes**

"As long as the public health practitioners haven't suggested a total lockdown, as long as you're able to maintain a reasonable amount of distance and you're being good about hand hygiene and especially if you're staying completely home if you're having any signs of illness, then getting outside for a walk is good," Dr. Buhr said. "It clears your mind, and it keeps you active."

Everyone should all aim for 150 minutes of physical activity every week, he said, but the amount of time you walk each day can vary. What counts is that you're moving your body.

**Stretch it out for at least 30
seconds**

Stretching is essential, Dr. Lee said, because it helps maintain flexibility. Here are six simple barre stretches you can do in your home or outside. Ms. Johnson also likes the warrior pose stretch and the prayer stretch, which targets the lower back. In a Zoom meeting? Stretch right now.

The Mayo Clinic says you should be stretching at least two to three times a week. And you should hold each stretch for 30 seconds for most areas and up to 60 seconds for sore or problem areas. Don't bounce, which can cause injury. Expect to feel tension while you're stretching, but not pain.

**Work on your breathing,
because anxiety is real**

Ms. Johnson recommends a technique called diaphragmatic breathing. Lie down on your back and put your hands on your abdominal region. When you breathe in, make your belly rise. And when you breathe out, your belly should fall. Stay in that position and take 10 deep breaths.

"It's really important that we take a few moments and pause and really just sort of relax ourselves and our nervous system," Ms. Johnson said. (Read more about how to breathe to feel better.)

Make sure you clean up after yourself. Dr. Buhr said that even if you're doing activities in your home, you still need to observe the same kind of hygiene practices that health officials are advising.

You should wash your hands carefully and try not to touch your face. If you need to touch your face, he recommends using a clean towel. And if you're using any kind of gym equipment at home, clean it with soap and water or any household cleaner before and after so that if you're sharing it with others, you're not spreading germs around.

**Exercise equipment
that's great to have
at home**



Jump rope

Jumping rope gets your heart rate up and burns a lot of calories. Wirecutter, a New York Times company that reviews and recommends products, likes the XYLsports Jump Rope. It's affordable enough that everyone in your household can have their own.



Weighted hula hoops

If the weather is crummy or you have a few minutes to spare while watching YouTube videos, whip out a hula hoop. A recent study showed that six weeks of weighted hula-hooping for an average of 13 minutes a day significantly decreased both waist circumference and body fat, and increased muscularity, compared to a period of walking.



Foam rollers

They help reduce muscle stiffness, and you can use a foam roller as a basic exercise tool. Wirecutter has options here.



Resistance bands

Ms. Johnson suggests ordering a package that includes a variety of resistance intensities because you will progress. Wirecutter likes the Bodylastics Stackable Tube Resistance Bands.

Resources you can take advantage of online

- Here's a thorough guide to yoga for people of all experience levels, with links to a variety of apps and classes.
- If you're looking to relax, this guide to yoga can help walk you through it.
- A series of six-minute workout videos that exercise four main muscle groups: cardio,

the lower body, the upper body and the core.

- A guide to a nine-minute strength workout that should be used two to three times a week for maximum benefits.
- A guide to short high intensity interval training workouts.
- A guide to meditation, if you just need grounding.