

COVID-19

Physical well-being

Introduction

Whether you're still working onsite, working from home, or if you've been furloughed, COVID-19 is going to have an impact on your well-being, so it is important to take action to help get yourself through these uncertain times.

Looking after yourself physically has a significant impact on your overall well-being. It is more than just exercising; it's giving your body everything it needs to function at its best. This includes what you ingest and the quality of sleep you get.

Exercise

As it stands you can go out once a day to exercise, so use this time! Physical exercise will not only give you a welcomed change of scenery, but it also releases endorphins that will help you deal with any stress or anxiety you may be feeling.

Aim to move every day – this could be something as small as some gentle stretches which is not only great for your muscles and posture, but it can also help give you a break from any negative thoughts you may be having during these times.

Aim to exercise to elevate your heart-rate 3+ times a week – this not only has benefits such as reducing risk of stroke or type 2 diabetes but also lowers the risk of depression by up to 30%.

If you struggle with motivation to exercise find someone who can help hold you accountable, or find someone to create some healthy competition with.

There are a vast range of resources you can follow online for free, from HIIT home workouts to your local gyms hosting online sessions. It's important to choose classes that are suitable to your current fitness levels and taught by someone who is qualified to do so.

Sport England has collated some of the best online resources to keep active during the COVID-19 outbreak, including things you can do at home.

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Nutrition

During periods of stress, it is normal for our eating habits to be one of the first things to fall by the wayside. Not only do our normal routines change, but we may also crave junk food and alcohol.

Fuelling your body with the right food will give you the energy you need to keep yourself healthy:

- Aim to eat three meals a day at regular intervals
- Be mindful of eating out of boredom rather than hunger
- Eat mainly healthy snacks, but treat yourself without guilt occasionally too
- If you've got more time than you normally would, use it to prepare healthy meals from scratch, don't be afraid to experiment and learn new recipes
- If you have cravings for unhealthy things, do some research into what your body could be needing, eg. craving chocolate can indicate a magnesium deficiency, but make sure you use credible sources

Hydration

Your body and brain cannot function without enough hydration. The symptoms of being dehydrated are more than just feeling thirsty or having a dry mouth – feeling tired can be one of the first symptoms of dehydration.

Contrary to the popular belief that you should drink 8 glasses of water a day, everyone's required water intake varies significantly based on factors such as height, weight, age, gender, and physical activity. You can use a Hydration Calculator to estimate your required intake.

The NHS advocate that you should drink enough during the day so your pee is a pale clear colour – the NHS website contains a Dehydration Guide and lots of information on hydration.

Keep a record of your daily intake to make sure that you drink the right amount. There are plenty of free apps that you can download and use to track your intake, as well set reminders throughout the day.

If you don't like the taste of water, experiment with adding different fruit to it, or you can add squash/ flavourings, but try to make sure that they have no added sugar.

Sleep

Sleep is fundamental to maintaining your mental health and well-being. Getting the right amount of good quality sleep will have an enormous impact on how you feel and how you cope with day to day life.

In addition to the stress caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the clocks have recently changed, which can take some time to get used to and you may find that your sleep is all over the place. Here are some tips to try get the most out of your sleep:

- Create a calming bedtime routine
- Get some natural sunlight, especially during sunrise and sunset, as this will regulate your body clock
- Try to avoid screens in the evening, at the very least take all the blue light out of them or purchase some blue light blocking glasses
- Cut back on caffeine, especially in the afternoon
- Don't eat a heavy meal close to bedtime
- Avoid an excessive alcohol intake
- If you are struggling to get to sleep, through disrupted routines or anxiety, there are thousands of free apps available that can help guide you to a better night sleep
- Invest in a sleep tracker so that you can understand your sleep pattern and what you can do to improve it

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Useful resources

General health and well-being

www.nhs.uk

Healthy eating

www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide

www.nutritionist-resource.org.uk

www.nutritionist-resource.org.uk/blog/2020/03/20/the-impact-of-nutrition-on-brain-structure-and-mental-performance

Hydration

www.nhs.uk/conditions/dehydration

www.hydrationsforhealth.com/en/hydration-tools/hydration-calculator

Sleeping well

www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-guidelines-covid-19-isolation

Exercise

www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout

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