

Staying active during COVID-19 self quarantine

Goal; Maintain, support and promote physical activity for health

What is physical activity?

Physical activity includes all forms of active recreation, sports participation, cycling and walking, as well as activities you do at work and around the home and garden. It doesn't have to be exercise or sport – play, dance, gardening, and even house cleaning and carrying heavy shopping is all part of being physically active.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when so many of us are very restricted in our movements, it is even more important for people of all ages and abilities to be as active as possible. Even a short break from sitting, by doing 3-5 minutes of physical movement, such as walking or stretching, will help ease muscle strain, relieve mental tension and improve blood circulation and muscle activity. Regular physical activity can also help to give the day a routine and be a way of staying in contact with family and friends.

Why do we need it?

Regular physical activity benefits both the body and mind.

- It can reduce high blood pressure,
- It helps manage weight and
- Reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and various cancers.
- It improves bone and muscle strength and increases balance, flexibility and fitness.
- For older people, activities that improve balance help to prevent falls and injuries.
- For children, regular physical activity helps support healthy growth and development and reduce the risk of disease in later life,
- Through regular activity, children can develop fundamental movement skills and build social relationships.
- Regular physical activity also improves mental health
- Can reduce the risk of depression, cognitive decline and delay the onset of dementia
- Improves overall feelings of wellbeing.

How much physical activity is recommended?

Infants under the age of 1 year need to

- be physically active several times a day.

Children under 5 years of age

- should spend at least 180 minutes a day in physical activities, with 3-4 year-olds being moderately or vigorously active for an hour a day.

Children and adolescents aged 5-17 years

- all children and adolescents should do at least 60 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity, including activities that strengthen muscle and bone, at least 3 days per week.

Adults aged over 18 years

- should do a total of at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity throughout the week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity throughout the week, including muscle-strengthening activities 2 or more days per week.
- older adults with poor mobility should do physical activity to enhance balance and prevent falls on 3 or more days per week.

Some physical activity ideas to help you stay active

For Infants under 1 year of age

- Spend regular time doing floor-based play with your baby in a prone position ('tummy time') and spread this throughout the day while baby is awake.

For Children under 5 years of age

- Active play in and around the home – invent games which involve being active and can develop skills in throwing, jumping, catching, kicking, as well as developing posture and balance.
- Active play and games where children get out of breath, such as running around, skipping and jumping.

For Children and adolescents aged 5-17 years

- Active games and active play with family.
- Join in online active games or activity classes, also look for online physical education classes as well as exercise routines suitable for adolescents.

- Set up playground games indoors such as Jump rope and hula hop – make up new games and challenges that involve being active.
- Learn a new skill – for example try and learn to juggle.
- Encourage doing some muscle strength training activities such as lifting weights or use improvised weight such as bottles full of water or sand.

For Adults

- Climb up the stairs as much as you can where available, think of it as an opportunity to be active.
- Walk even in small spaces, walking around or walking on the spot, can help one remain active.
- Stand up reduce your sedentary time by standing up whenever possible. Ideally, aim to interrupt sitting and reclining time every 30 minutes.
- Make time to play with children and family where applicable
- Use household chores as a way to be more physical activity.
- Join in an online exercise class or make up your own routine to music you enjoy that uses the major muscle groups and raises your heart rate.
- Do some muscle strengthening activities such as lifting weights or improvise using full bottles of water or simply use your own body weight and do sets of press ups, sit ups, squats for example
- Make time for fun, such as dancing to music.

How do I stay active in and around the home?

- *Try and reduce long periods of time spent sitting and on the screen*, whether for work, studying, watching TV, reading, or using social media or playing games using screens. Reduce sitting for long periods by taking short 3-5 minute breaks every 20-30 minutes. Simply stand up and stretch or even better, take a walk around the house, up and down the stairs where available, or into the garden. By just moving around and stretching you can improve your health and wellbeing.
- Set up a regular routine to be active every day, by planning a physical activity or exercise break either by yourself, by joining an online class where possible, or by setting up a time to be active online with your friends or colleagues. Making a specific time to be active helps ensure you get your daily physical activity. Put the time in your diary, and it will help remind you. Stick with it, as this will help you build a regular routine, and help you adjust to new ways of working, study and family life under COVID-19 guidelines and advice
- *Be active with your family and friends*, connecting with others can help you and your family in the home and elsewhere spend time together while maintaining social distancing as advice and be active. Planning time to be active with your children with active games at home, walks in the garden, or dancing can be a way the whole family can relax, be together and be active and healthy whilst at home.
- *Set yourself and your family Be Active goals*, by choosing a specific type of activity, time of day and/or number of minutes you will do every day. Get each family member to choose their own goal which sets a bit of a challenge but is realistic with help from family or friends and motivation. Record your progress on a weekly activity chart and, if you think it would help, reward yourself with something you value and is healthy.

SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR

Sedentary behaviour and low levels of physical activity are likely to increase and can have negative effects on the health, well-being and quality of life of individuals. Self-quarantine can also cause additional stress and challenge the mental health of citizens. Physical activity and relaxation techniques can be valuable tools to help remain calm and continue to protect health during this time.

How about amount of sedentary time?

Infants under the age of 1-year need to

- Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g. prams/ strollers, high chairs, or strapped on a caregiver's back).
- Screen time is not recommended

Children under 5 years of age

- Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g. prams/ strollers, high chairs, or strapped on a caregiver's back)
- For 1-year-olds, sedentary screen time (such as watching TV or videos, playing computer games) is not recommended.
- For those aged 2 years, sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better.
- For those aged 3-4 years, sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better

Children and adolescents aged 5-17years

- Reduce screen and sitting time as much as possible with breaks every 30 minutes

Adults aged over 18 years

- Reduce screen and sitting time as much as possible with breaks every 30 minutes

So how do I stay safe while exercising in COVID-19?

- **Do not exercise if you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing.** Stay home and rest, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions from the Ministry of Health
- **If you are able to go for a walk or bicycle ride** always practice physical distancing and wash your hands with water and soap before you leave, when you get to where you are going, and as soon as you get home. If water and soap are not immediately available, use alcohol-based hand rub (sanitizer).

- **If you go to a park or public open space to walk, run or exercise** always practice physical distancing and wash your hands with water and soap, before you leave, when you get to where you are going, and as soon as you get home. If water and soap are not immediately available, use alcohol-based hand rub(sanitizer). Follow the directions from the Ministry of Health.
- **If you are not regularly active prior to COVID 19, start slowly and with low intensity activities**, like walking and low impact exercises. Start with shorter duration, like 5-10 minutes, and progressively build up to 30 minutes or more continuously over a few weeks. It is better and safer to be active for short periods more frequently than to try and be active for long periods when you are not used to it as it may discourage one to continue being active in case they experience pain after activity.
- **Choose the right activity so that you reduce the risk of injury** and that you enjoy the activity.
- **Choose the right intensity (how hard)** according to your health status and fitness level. You should be able to breath comfortably and hold a conversation while you do light- and moderate-intensity physical activity.