

Ways to Stay Physically Active During COVID-19

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) looks like it is here to stay for a while as the number of cases continues to climb. Authorities are getting ready for the long haul as schools, gyms, restaurants, and more businesses are closing for weeks or more.

Right now, the new normal will be staying at home as much as possible to avoid public places and contact with other people. This is a drastic change for people who are used to attending events and socializing. For anyone who is trying to stay calm and boost their immune systems, staying at home poses another challenge: staying active may require some new routines.

Your NSTU Group Insurance Trustees want to provide some tips and tricks for how to stay physically active while staying at home.

Physical Activity, Health, and COVID-19

Staying active is important under normal circumstances, as it helps with weight management, disease prevention, and mental health. There are other reasons to stay active during the COVID-19 outbreak, even during self-isolation, quarantine, and social distancing.

Exercise:

- Lifts mood, which is critical when faced with the challenge of staying inside and finding alternative activities to do to substitute for some of your usual ones.
- Improves your cholesterol profile and lowers blood pressure, which can help lower the risk for heart disease.
- Helps you sleep better and manage stress better, which can both be difficult when schedules and routines are disrupted.

Outdoor Activities

That leaves the question: what can you do to stay fit if you are locked out of the gym or are stuck indoors? Swimming, team sports, and group fitness classes at the gym are out of the question while practicing social distancing and staying at least 6 feet away from others, but there are plenty of other indoor and outdoor options that you can do by yourself.

Outdoor activities within your neighborhoods are safest if you can stay at least 6 feet away from other people. Walking, bicycling (safely!), hiking, and jogging let you get some fresh air. If you need company, phoning or facetime a friend while exercising can do the trick.

Indoor Activities

Exercising indoors can be preferable for a variety of reasons, such as needing to watch the kids, avoiding poor weather, feeling safer in your own home, or simply preferring indoor activities to the great outdoors. If you already have workout equipment such as a treadmill, elliptical, or stationary bike, you are good to go with your cardio workout.

If you are not set up for working out at home, it is not that difficult to get started. These are some options for workouts if you have absolutely no equipment:

- Aerobics or dancing on your own or with workout videos.
- Circuits with push-ups, squats, front and side lunges, calf raises, squats, jumping jacks, crunches, planks, and any other exercise you can think of to get moving. It helps to go from one exercise to another without resting, and you can alternate more intense ones with less intense ones to get a break while still moving.
- Yoga and mat pilates.

There is some inexpensive equipment you can purchase online and have delivered that can help you work out as well. Resistance bands, a pair of dumbbells, or a kettlebell can give you a good resistance training session and they cost less than \$20. A step platform can give you a more intense aerobic workout without the high impact of jumping.

To fight boredom, it can help to listen to music, watch the news, a movie, or a TV program while working out. If you like, there are some streaming services that let you take exercise classes live while watching the instructor online. There are also services that offer a variety of exercise classes and workouts that you can view and participate in whenever you like.

Breaking Up Sitting Time

Staying at home more may make it easier to sit around more: on the couch watching television, reading, playing board or card games with family members, etc. It is now, more than ever, that you can benefit from being aware of sitting for too long without moving.

- Mimicking the classroom environment can help increase activity. For example, ensure that you continue to start your morning as you would on a school day. Get up, eat breakfast, and get dressed for the day.
- Don't forget about recess and lunch time! Plan your day to take breaks for healthy snacks and some physical activity.
- Set-up reminders on your phone or create a formal schedule and stick to it.
- If you are teaching your children or supporting your students from home, creating a proper work station is critical. If possible, refrain from having your work station on the couch and coffee table. Being set-up at the kitchen table or proper desk will dramatically help with posture and physical health. Setting up your computer at a standing desk, or

making a makeshift standing desk simply by putting the laptop on a countertop for a while to work, can allow you to engage a few more muscles and move around a bit.

Stopping the spread of COVID-19 may take unprecedented changes to daily routines, but staying healthy through it all is still a priority. Physical activity is essential to optimal health, so it is a good idea to prepare for working out on your own.

In addition to the tips above, don't forget to visit the NSTU Group Insurance website at www.nstuinsurance.ca for all benefit information to support both your physical and mental health.