



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.

How does COVID-19 infect a person?

Human coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person to others through close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands, and touching the eyes, nose or mouth after touching an infected surface. In rare instances, the virus is spread by fecal contamination.

How can I help protect myself and others from exposure to COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses?

To protect yourself and others from exposure to COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses:

- Stay at home when experiencing flu-like symptoms;
- Practice social distancing by staying at least 6 feet apart from people if you need to leave your home;
- Wash hands thoroughly and often;
- Use cough/sneeze etiquette – cough/sneeze into a tissue or into your elbow, not hands – discard the tissue in a waste basket and clean hands with sanitizer or soap & water immediately;
- Frequently clean high-touch surfaces like counter-tops, keyboards, phones, light switches and doorknobs, etc.

What should I do if I have travelled outside of Nova Scotia?

The Province of Nova Scotia, under the authority of the Health Protection Act, is requiring anyone who has travelled outside Nova Scotia to self-isolate for 14 days upon return, even if they are symptom-free.

If you've travelled recently and you develop a fever, with a temperature 38°C or higher, or a cough, you should call 811 for assessment. Not everyone who has concerns about COVID-19 needs to call 811. To find out if you need to call, use the COVID-19 online self-assessment found at www.novascotia.ca.

If you need in-person assessment, 811 will refer you to a centre. Don't go to a COVID-19 assessment centre unless 811 referred you.

How to manage self-isolation or quarantine?

There are psychological impacts of self-isolation or quarantine. Our routines and daily interactions play a critical part in our social connections and identities.

Here are a few suggestions on how to best manage your time and mental health while physically away from your workplace.

- Get the facts – Obtain medical advice from trusted sources only. If you're concerned or need assistance with understanding what's needed, reach out to provincial support resources.
- Create a daily routine – Establish a daily process and set objectives. Don't let the basics slip. Create a dedicated workspace, maintain normal business hours and an adequate sleep schedule. Keep up with daily hygiene, chores

and cleaning practices.

- Eating and hydration – Maintain a healthy diet and stay hydrated. Avoid high sugar snacks and beverages to avoid swings in mood and energy levels. A healthy immune system is best equipped to fight infections.
- Physical activity – Don't forget to move. Exercise and movement are good for your mind and body. Stay as active as possible and set reminders if necessary. There are online exercise programs designed for small spaces.
- Think about natural light – Natural light plays an important role in maintaining a positive outlook. Try to find a spot where natural light is available.
- Social connections – Stay engaged with your personal and professional support networks. If you start to feel overwhelmed or isolated, call or video-conference with family, friends, or peers. You never have to be alone.
- Mental fitness – Be active in supporting your mental health and resiliency. Practice and engage in online activities you find rewarding. Spend quality time within your household. Avoid extended time or attention on pandemic related news, read a book that promotes mental fitness and try starting a daily journal.



Are there other benefits that can support me during these times?

Your NSTU Group Insurance Trustees have worked hard to offer benefits that are available to support you and your family during this very challenging time. Some of these programs are:

- Resilience (Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) – This program helps you reach a team of experienced counsellors from Homewood Health by phone.
- Your Wellness Partner – This is the newest offering focusing on mental health which provides multiple levels of support via telephone, online CBT modules, etc.
- HealthCareAssist Program – This provides individual case management of all types of medical conditions.
- Seniors' Care Assistance Program – This program will connect you to publicly-funded senior care resources.
- CAREpath Cancer Assistance Program – If you, your spouse or dependent children suspect having cancer, are diagnosed with cancer, or are already living with cancer, this program connects you with your own personal oncology nurse.

For more information on the above programs and all other benefits available to you, please visit the NSTU Group Insurance website at www.nstuinsurance.ca.

Support Benefits During COVID-19

The spread of the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus has created a lot of uncertainty in our lives. It has forced the closure of schools, the cancellation of trips and large gatherings, people to self-isolate and practice social distancing, and so much more. This pandemic has created a time of uncertainty for everyone. With uncertainty can come added stress, struggles with both physical and mental health, and strain on you and your family as you try to navigate what the next steps will be.

The NSTU Group Insurance Trustees want to ensure you have the help and support you need to get through these challenging times including everything that comes with self-isolation. Below are some of the programs available to you as well as a link to the complete Member Assistance Program (MAP) booklet.

1. Resilience (Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) – This program helps you reach a team of experienced counsellors from Homewood Health by phone. They will listen to your concerns, offer sound advice and help you create an action plan to address issues relating to self-isolation, anxiety, depression, trauma transitions, etc. An overview of the program can be found here – www.nstuinsurance.ca/members/active/resilience/

In this trying time, we encourage you to check out the Self-Care Starter Kit. This kit was developed pre COVID-19 but still contains some helpful ideas that can be adapted to help with self-isolation. – www.nstuinsurance.ca/wp-content/uploads/HH_NSTU_SELF-CARE-KIT_EN_1119.pdf or by calling English: **1-877-955-NSTU (6788)** or in French: **1-514-875-0720**.

There are a number of E-Courses online as well at www.myreilience.com.

To access any services from Resilience, please create an account using **Contract # 39146** & your “Member Certificate Number” which is actually **your 6 digit Professional Number**.

2. Your Wellness Partner – This is the newest offering focusing on mental health which provides multiple levels of support via telephone, online CBT modules, etc. More information on this program can be found here – www.nstuinsurance.ca/members/active/your-wellness-partner/ or by calling **1-844-453-6788**.
3. HealthCareAssist Program – This provides individual case management of all types of medical conditions. Via telephone, a nurse case manager provides a single point of contact, creates continuity of care, and provides health care advice during this time of self-isolation. More information on this program can be found here – www.nstuinsurance.ca/members/active/healthcareassist-program/ or by calling **1-844-453-6788**.
4. Seniors’ Care Assistance Program – This program will connect you to publicly funded senior care resources. Nurses will help you and your families manage access to senior care and support services such as nursing care, medication reminders, meal deliveries, etc. These services are fully assessed and approved by Bayshore HealthCare. Please note that some of these services may be limited with the COVID-19 outbreak but

by calling the number below they will guide you through the services that are available – www.nstuinsurance.ca/members/active/seniors-care-assistance-program/ or by calling **1-844-453-6788**.

5. CAREpath Cancer Assistance Program – If you, your spouse or dependent children suspect having cancer, are diagnosed with cancer, or are already living with cancer this program connects you with your own personal oncology nurse. With the support of leading oncologists, they guide you through every step of your cancer experience, from diagnosis, through treatment and into survivorship. More information on this program can be found here – www.nstuinsurance.ca/members/active/carepath/ or by calling **1-844-453-6788**.

Due to the closure of the NSTU office to in-person meetings Counselling Services will continue with their regularly scheduled appointments by phone, but no new appointments are being scheduled. In addition, there will be no Early Intervention Program (EIP) at this time.

However, as you can see, there are a number of programs that are still available to support you even as many people are practicing self-isolation. All of this information and much more can be found at the new NSTU Group Insurance website at www.nstuinsurance.ca. You can also review more details on each of these programs by reviewing the Member Assistance Program (MAP) Booklet at www.nstuinsurance.ca/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-MAP-booklet-Jan-23-2020.pdf.