

STAY PHYSICALLY ACTIVE DURING SELF-QUARANTINE (HOME-BASED EXERCISES)

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Abstract

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.

Introduction

Examples of home-based exercises

To support individuals in staying physically active while at home, WHO/Europe has prepared a set of examples of home-based exercises.

Knee to elbow

Touch one knee with the opposite elbow, alternating sides. Find your own pace. Try to perform this for 1–2 minutes, rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise should increase your heart and breathing rates.



Plank

Support your forearms firmly on the ground, with the elbows under the shoulders. Keep the hips at the level of the head. Hold for 20–30 seconds (or more, if possible), rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your belly, arms and legs.



Back extensions

Touch your ears with your fingertips and lift your upper body, keeping the legs on the ground. Lower the upper body again. Perform this exercise 10–15 times (or more), rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your back muscles.



Squats

Place your feet at hip distance with the toes pointing slightly outwards. Bend the knees as much as feels comfortable, keeping the heels on the ground and the knees over (not in front of) the feet. Bend and stretch the legs. Perform this exercise 10–15 times (or more), rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your legs and glutes.



Side knee lifts

Touch your knee with your elbow, lifting the knee to the side, alternating sides. Find your own pace. Try to perform this for 1–2 minutes, rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise should increase your heart and breathing rates.



Superman

Place your hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Lift one arm

forward and the opposite leg back, alternating sides. Perform this exercise 20–30 times (or more), rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your belly, glutes and back muscles.



Bridge

Plant your feet firmly on the ground with the knees over the heels. Lift the hips as much as it feels comfortable and slowly lower them again. Perform this exercise 10–15 times (or more), rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your glutes.



Chair dips

Hold onto the seat of a chair, with your feet about half a meter away from the chair. Bend your arms as you lower your hips to the ground, then straighten the arms. Perform this exercise 10–15 times (or more), rest for 30–60 seconds, and

repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your triceps.



Chest opener

Interlace your fingers behind your back. Stretch your arms and open your chest forward. Hold this position for 20–30 seconds (or more). This position stretches your chest and shoulders.



Child's pose

With the knees on the ground, bring your hips to your heels. Rest your belly on your thighs and actively stretch your arms forward. Breathe normally. Hold this position for 20–30 seconds (or more). This position stretches your back, shoulders and sides of the body.



Seated meditation

Sit comfortably on the floor with your legs crossed (alternatively, sit on a chair). Make sure your back is straight. Close your eyes, relax your body and progressively deepen your breathing. Concentrate on your breath, trying not to focus on any thoughts or concerns. Remain in this position for 5–10 minutes or more, to relax and clear your mind.



Legs up the wall

Bring your hips close (5–10 cm) to the wall and let your legs rest. Close your eyes, relax your body and progressively deepen your breathing. Concentrate on your breath, trying not to focus on any thought or concern. Rest in this pose for up to 5 minutes. This position is meant to be comfortable, relaxing and de-stressing.



More 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, 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 hop-scotch – make up new games and challenges that involve being active.
- Learn a new skill – for example try an 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, think of it as an opportunity to be active.
- 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 you 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 and squats.
- Make time for fun, such as dancing to music.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented worldwide public health concern. Characterized by rapid and high frequency human-to-human transmission, the World Health Organization has

recommended implementation of public health measures, including isolation of all suspected infectious individuals for a 14-day quarantine period, while governments have introduced “social distancing” and “lock-downs” of varying severity to curtail COVID-19 spread. Recent COVID-19 research further suggests there are major sleep problems and psychological disorders (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression) associated with the reduction of movement and activities, as well as the reduced social interaction. There have been no studies examining the effect of physical activity at home during such periods of isolation. However, based on previous research, potential tactics to overcome these negative effects include home-based exercise, exergaming, dancing to music, and participation in yoga. Adults should accumulate at least 150 min of moderate-intensity and at least 75 min of vigorous-intensity of activity divided in to 5–7 sessions per week. This training volume could be reduced by 30% for children and adolescents if replaced by recess or active play in and around the home.

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