

# Health and Wellness News

## WHY SELF-CARE IS IMPORTANT DURING A PANDEMIC



June 2020



Staying on track with healthy habits like consistent workouts, healthy eating, or a sleep routine can be challenging at any time, let alone during a time as stressful as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spending more time at home has made it easy for people to become couch potatoes. The heightened stress can also be immobilizing for some or result in unhealthy coping habits like stress eating or too many “Zoom happy hours”.

It’s understandable for uncertainty and changes to throw us off track. Yet, experts anticipate that the coronavirus will be with us for quite a while, so we all need to figure out how get (or stay) on track with self-care despite the pandemic.

Here are some ways to prioritize your health and wellness during this challenging time.

- **Prioritize sleep:** Quality sleep keeps your immune system functioning well. In fact, there are aspects of the body’s immune response that only take place while you sleep. Not getting enough sleep can make you feel tired, less able to cope with stress, increase appetite, and lower immunity.
- **Stay active:** Exercise releases feel-good hormones (endorphins) that improve your mood and help with sleep. Staying physically active also benefits immunity and helps to ward off chronic diseases.
- **Avoid stress eating:** Instead of reaching for a snack mindlessly to self-soothe, try eating mindfully. Mindful eating is about paying attention to your body and what it needs. It’s about making a thoughtful decision about when, what, and how much to eat by noticing your body’s hunger and satiety cues. It can also help to keep healthy snacks on hand that will help you avoid sweets and carbs that can weaken immunity. Instead reach for nuts, Greek yogurt, nut butters, avocados, bananas, or other fruit.
- **Practice gratitude:** It’s easy to focus on fears, worries, and other pessimistic thoughts during this time. However, these types of thoughts will increase stress. A consistent gratitude practice where you write at least three things you’re grateful for every day can help shift your mood, making you feel more optimistic.

# 5 EASY WAYS TO LIFT YOUR MOOD WHILE STAYING AT HOME

Whether you're working from home, have returned to the office, or some combination of both, not being able to do all that you used to, may be taking its toll on you. Feelings of frustration, impatience, anxiety, and loneliness are growing for many people.

Taking steps to support mental or emotional wellbeing is as important as self-care for your physical health. Here are five easy ways to lift your spirits.

**1** Music – Listening to music has been scientifically proven to impact mood. Of course, the type of music matters, so create a playlist with uplifting or relaxing songs that you can listen to when you're feeling down.

**2** Laughter – It's been called the best medicine and for good reason. When we laugh, we release endorphins that can help relieve stress and depression. Watch funny YouTube videos or add some comedies to your Netflix watch list.

**3** Dance – While it may not be everyone's cup of tea, it's a great form of exercise for those who do enjoy it and can be fun. There are great dance videos on YouTube, whether you're looking for a good workout or simply wanting to learn some new dance steps.

**4** Go outside – Getting some fresh air and sunshine (if it's available) can go a long way toward reducing stress hormones, especially being in nature. You don't necessarily have to go to the park or a hiking trail to achieve this. You can simply spend some time in your yard or if you don't have one, walk safely in your neighborhood focusing on the trees, plants, flowers, bees, or any other aspects of nature.

**5** Play with kids or pets – Of course, not everyone has these, but if you do, taking a play break can shift your mood. Your children and/or pets will love it too! If you don't have either, you can still take a play break. Crafting, video games, or adult coloring books can also help you feel good.



## STRETCHING & ERGONOMICS WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

With more people working from home due to COVID-19, tight muscles and even repetitive motion injuries are a likely consequence if your work area is not ergonomically correct. This may be especially true if you're spending long hours in front of the computer. Here are some suggestions for avoiding these issues.

### START BY DOING WHAT YOU CAN TO MAKE YOUR HOME WORK AREA ERGONOMICALLY CORRECT:

- Top of the monitor at or slightly below eye level
- Comfortable chair that supports your lower back (use a pillow if needed)
- Hips, knees, and elbows at a 90-degree angle
- Feet resting on the floor or use a foot-rest or box
- Using an external mouse and keyboard is highly recommended. This allows you to raise the laptop monitor to the appropriate height and the keyboard to the right elbow and arm position.

Looking at a screen all day, especially if not positioned properly, can cause pain in the neck, shoulders, and lower back. Do these exercises at least once or twice a day to release tension:

- Neck rolls – tilt your head forward and circle it around 3-5 times in each direction.
- Shoulder rolls – do these when you notice yourself slouching by lifting your shoulders into a shrug then slowly rolling your shoulders back and around. Do 3-5 in each direction.
- Chest opener – stand and clasp your hands together behind your lower back. While holding your arms straight, raise your hands as high as you comfortably can and hold for five seconds.
- Spine twist – while sitting in your chair, turn your shoulders around and grab the top of the chair with your hands and twist around as far as you can without moving your hips. Hold this for five seconds and repeat on the other side.



# CHICKEN AND SWEET POTATO SKILLET

Looking for some comfort food? Try this yummy and healthy recipe!

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, cut into
- ½ inch cubes
- ½ medium onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 cups cubed cooked chicken
- 1 can of black beans (15 oz.) rinsed and drained
- 1 medium zucchini, chopped
- 1 cup chicken broth 1 cup salsa
- 1 large sweet red pepper, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

## DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil over medium heat in a large skillet. Add sweet potato and onions; cook and stir until lightly browned, about 5-8 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 minute longer.
2. Stir in all other ingredients including seasonings.
3. Bring to a boil and reduce heat. Cover and simmer until sweet potatoes are tender, about 10-12 minutes.



For more Health and Wellness information visit our website [www.4eap.com](http://www.4eap.com)  
or

Call to speak to a Care Coordinator

1-800-324-4327

En Español 1-800-324-2490

FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL

COUNSELING SERVICES

LEGAL AND FINANCIAL CONSULTATIONS

ONLINE WORK/LIFE AND WELLNESS RESOURCES



Interface EAP

CRISIS COUNSELING 24/7

Your employer has contracted with Interface EAP to provide you an Employee Assistance Program. Services under your EAP are available to you, spouse and eligible dependents under the age of 26.