

Q&A: Staying healthy while teleworking

22 April 2020, by From Mayo Clinic News Network,



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DEAR MAYO CLINIC: With social distancing guidelines in place due to COVID-19, I've been working from home for a few weeks, and I can tell it's already taking a toll on my health. I feel more tired and less motivated to exercise and eat well, even though I have more time for both. What should I be focusing on to stay healthy while being stuck at home?

ANSWER: While staying at [home](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic is a crucial part of stopping the spread of the virus, it may disrupt many of your usual routines and make it harder to maintain [healthy habits](#). But even when you're spending most of your [time](#) at home, there are still lots of ways you can weave wellness into your daily activities.

You mention that you're more tired than usual. That's not surprising during these days of uncertainty and stress. One key way to boost your energy is to get a good night's sleep. This period of time, when [social distancing](#) is forcing many people to work from home, actually can be a good opportunity to make healthy sleep a priority.

Go to bed around the same time every night—close

to the time you typically would when you're not working from home. Then allow yourself a full seven to nine hours of sleep, which is the amount most healthy adults need. Without the pressure of arriving at work at a specific time, and no commute to navigate, you may find that a later wake-up time and a slower start to the day ease some of your stress and fatigue.

If falling asleep at night is a challenge because it's hard to shut off stressful or worrisome thoughts, try daily meditation. It doesn't have to be a formal practice. Meditation can be simply five to 10 minutes of intentional focus, during which you calm your mind and minimize random thoughts. There are many forms of meditation, but most share a quiet setting, a comfortable position, focused attention and an open attitude. Research has shown that, over time, daily meditation can improve sleep, reduce stress and anxiety, and lessen fatigue. You may try searching online for "free meditation app" to see if there is a program that will work well for you.

Exercise is a crucial part of staying healthy, especially during stressful times. When you don't feel motivated, keep in mind that you don't need to do a full-body workout every day to reap the benefits of exercise. Get outside and take a walk or go for a bike ride—all while continuing to follow social distancing guidelines. Not only will you be physically active, but also you'll get a change of scenery from your home office, which can boost your mood.

Now also is a good time to mix up your exercise routine. If you have exercise equipment you haven't put to use for a while, dust it off and hop on. Many online and app-based [exercise](#) programs are offering free trials now, making it an opportune time to try something new.

Maintaining a healthy diet is always an important part of wellness, but even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. With more time on your hands and fewer options to dine out, this could be a

good chance to try some dietary changes that can make a difference in your overall health. Those changes don't have to be big, and they don't need to involve elaborate meal plans. For example, you might try eating more whole foods, incorporating a meatless meal into your routine once or twice a week, reducing your intake of processed foods, and eating more fruits and vegetables.

As you think about ways to stay healthy, keep in mind that the COVID-19 pandemic is changing quickly. Stay informed and get your information from reliable sources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Mayo Clinic.

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APA citation: Q&A: Staying healthy while teleworking (2020, April 22) retrieved 28 November 2020 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-qa-healthy-teleworking.html>

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