



DIETETICS

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle while at home

By Simone Cammarere, OSCAR Care Group Dietitian

As a nation we are banding together in the fight against COVID 19. This change in lifestyle has seen us trade our work desks for a laptop at our kitchen tables and our children swap their classrooms for learning at home.

The change in our ordinary routines can make it increasingly difficult to maintain healthy habits. We are all facing increased levels of stress and have reduced access to essential products which makes it easier to eat convenient foods high in sugar, salt and fat like take-away or processed ready meals.

We are also predominantly confined to our homes which has seen an increase in screen time and reduction in physical activity for many. What we know is that good nutrition and staying active plays an important in supporting our immune system, mental health and overall well-being.

How can we stay healthy throughout the pandemic?



Four tips to maintain healthy habits in isolation:

1. Make a plan

Allocate a time to plan out the meals for the family for the week, make a list and do a weekly grocery shop.

This is a great strategy to help you spend less time going to and from the shops whilst practising social distancing and isolation and is great to keep your health goals. By planning and having what you need in the house, you are more likely to stick to the healthy meals that you have planned in comparison to going to the shop in a panic or ordering take out.

While planning allow your children to be involved in the process and use it as an opportunity to teach them about sometimes and everyday foods when planning your menu.



2. Make a new routine

Learning and working from home usually means a more flexible and self-directed schedule. Food can be eaten at any time of the day rather than at allocated break times. However keeping to similar eating routine is helpful in maintaining healthy habits.

When we don't stop at set times to eat we can often wait until we become really hungry, doing this means that we are more likely to reach for processed foods rather than making something healthy. If the whole family is home this is a great opportunity to eat more meals together, set times for breakfast, lunch and dinner where the whole family can stop and share a healthy meal.

It's also a great opportunity to help children become more involved in food preparation. Encourage children to stop their activities for morning and afternoon tea as well mimicking a normal school day. This helps keep their hunger in check and maintains their energy and concentration levels through the day.

3. Make sure you have healthy foods in the house

Learning and working from home may mean you don't pack a lunchbox, but it's still important all the healthy lunchbox snacks that you'd usually pack are readily available.

This means if you usually pack veggie sticks in your child's lunchbox make sure there are veggie sticks cut up ready in the fridge that are easily accessible. It's also important to try to minimise the amount of unhealthy foods you keep in the house. Treats can be a part of a healthy diet but having excess amounts readily available can be a big temptation.

Remember if they are there you are more likely to eat them. Enjoy treats in isolation by dedicating a time where you make a dessert as a family and enjoy it together.

4. Schedule time to keep physically active:

Being cooped up in the house means we are spending prolonged time sitting as much of our incidental daily exercise has been reduced. Exercise is one of the best ways to naturally reduce stress as exercising gives you a boost of endorphins (happy hormones). Getting out in the fresh air can also help to break up the monotony of being housebound. As little as thirty minutes on most days have been seen to have benefits. Make sure the whole family gets involved by scheduling a time that suits you and make it part of your new routine remember planning is important to keep you accountable. Both kids and adults like versatility so change up your daily exercise.





Exercise Ideas:

- Go for a walk around your neighbourhood or at a nearby walking track
- Play a sport in the backyard if you have the space – soccer, football, volleyball, cricket The options are endless.
- Go for a bike ride
- Put on some music and throw your own dance party – the kids will love it.
- Coming into the rainy winter days exercising inside may be necessary – spend some time on youtube looking up indoor workout videos or download a fitness app.

[Exercise video the whole family can enjoy:](#)



Ideas for snacks to keep in the house:

- Yoghurt
- Fruit
- Veggie sticks
- Mini cheese wheels
- Wholegrain crackers
- Fruit toast
- Trail mix
- Dry cereal

Healthy recipes to cook with the family:

<https://www.healthyfoodguide.com.au/recipe-collections/ready-20-minutes>

<https://www.taste.com.au/healthy>



Need help with creating a well-balanced diet?

This article was written by OSCAR Care Group Dietitian, Simone Cammarere. Please call or email via our contact details below.

Resources:

- <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2020/03/27/how-to-stay-fit-and-active-at-home-during-self-isolation.html>
- <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/food-and-nutrition-during-self-quarantine-what-to-choose-and-how-to-eat-healthily>
- <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/food-and-nutrition-tips-during-self-quarantine>
- <https://www.healthyfoodguide.com.au/>

