

# How to Stay Healthy While Social Distancing

COVID-19 has the public rethinking how they stay healthy -- both physically and mentally. Even those in good health can start to feel anxious and fearful when the words 'pandemic' and 'social distancing' are mentioned.

But can you stay active and mentally healthy while social distancing? The answer is a resounding yes.

While routines have changed, it's critical that people keep exercising and eating nutritious meals, since the body is often able to better fight off illnesses when it's healthy and strong. Taking these steps helps fight off stress, which most people are experiencing right now in one way or another.

Here is some advice from Cigna chief nursing officer, Mary Picerno to help stay healthy, both physically and mentally, during this time.

• **Get Outside:** While it's important to limit physical interactions,

getting outside for a run, walk or bicycle ride is a great way to boost endorphins and enjoy fresh air. Just make sure to maintain six feet between yourself and others. If weather or other reasons limit your ability to go outside, many companies and gyms are offering free online exercises right now. Endorphins have been found to reduce stress, increase feelings of happiness and help fight against depression.

• **Get Proper Nutrition:** Add fruits and vegetables to your plate for colorful, nutrient-rich meals. Vegetables also are a good source of fiber. Eating well will help you feel better and give you energy to keep moving. Now is a great time to try that new recipe or food subscription box!

• **Stay Hydrated:** Drinking plenty of water can help prevent dehydration. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

dehydration can cause unclear thinking and mood swings. Not sure how much to drink? Many medical professionals suggest following the 8x8 rule, eight ounces of water eight times a day.

• **Stay Connected:** Just because you can't be with friends and family in person doesn't mean you can't stay in touch. Set up time to connect with video chats, phone calls and emails. Staying connected doesn't have to be high-tech. Have kids or just a kid at heart? Write encouraging messages on your driveway or in your windows for your neighbors, and postal and delivery workers.

• **Know Your Options:** One of the best ways to prepare is knowing what to do if you start to show symptoms. Cigna and many other health insurers are now waiving the costs of doctor visits related to a COVID-19 diagnosis as well as the cost of COVID-19 FDA-ap-

proved testing. To minimize your exposure, call or email your doctor or a local health system about a telehealth visit to be screened for COVID-19. The provider will then identify what steps you should take next.

• **Get Support:** Talking through concerns and fears can help put them in perspective and make you feel calmer. You may want to reach out for professional support if you're struggling. Cigna offers many resources and tools, including a 24-hour toll-free help line (1-855-287-8400) to speak with qualified behavior health clinicians, a webinar focused on managing anxiety, fears and concerns, and mindfulness podcasts (available in English and Spanish) focused on improving resiliency and stress management.

During this challenging time, taking care of your health should be a priority.



**Jesica Petty**

Jesica Petty is a nurse assistant at SSM Health. She loves her job helping and taking care of patients.



**Jordan Landress, RN**

Jordan Landress is an amazing rn and such a hard worker. She's from Tuttle and still resides here with her husband and 2 daughters. She would go out of her way to help anyone in need.

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