Health experts are advising people to stay home as much as they can to stay safe from the coronavirus pandemic and slow its spread. This is especially important for those at higher risk, including people with cancer. It means big changes in daily routines including how and where you get your exercise, and what and when you eat.

But we know that healthy habits can affect a person’s risk for cancer and other diseases including heart disease and diabetes. This is because getting enough physical activity and eating healthy foods can help our bodies work as well as possible. And there is growing evidence that cancer survivors who have these healthy habits have better quality of life and might have better treatment outcomes. With a bit of creativity, you can find new ways to get plenty of physical activity and eat healthy food even while you’re staying home more.

**Exercises you can do at home**
The American Cancer Society recommends adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity each week. Moderate activities make you breathe as hard as you would during a brisk walk. Vigorous activities use your large muscle groups and make your heart beat faster, make you breathe faster and deeper, and make you sweat.

Even lower amounts are good for your health and are safe for most people. Besides helping to prevent some health problems, getting some physical activity can be helpful for your sleep, mood, and energy. It’s also important to limit sedentary behaviors such as sitting, lying down, watching television, or other kinds of screen time.

If you’re working or taking online classes from home:

• Stand up or walk around while you read and answer emails and other messages on your laptop or phone.
• During conference calls, stand up and pace, or stay seated and do leg lifts, knee lifts, and toe curls. Keep a weight under your desk for bicep curls. Do standing push-ups against a wall.
• Take a short walk during lunch, or in place of a coffee break.
• Set an alarm on your computer or phone to remind you to take an activity break. For example, take a one- or two-minute standing or walking break every hour.

Other ideas to get moving:

• Take a walk outside if it’s a nice day or walk inside around the house if it isn’t. Walk fast enough to speed up your heart rate and break a sweat.
• Walk up and down your stairs. Take every other step to give your legs a good workout.
• Turn on the radio and dance in the house, alone or with your partner.
• If you don’t have stairs or much open space, you can do jumping jacks, or walk or jog in place. Try to keep moving for at least 10 minutes.
• Use hand weights or grab an object like a soup can if you’re just starting to exercise, or a jug of water if you’re stronger. Bend at your elbows to curl your hand to shoulder level. Repeat 10 to 12 times, or until you can’t do it anymore.
• Do squats when cleaning out closets or playing with your children. Be sure to bend with your knees and keep your back straight.
• If you’re on social media or can search the internet, check for live-streaming exercise sessions or activity challenges that you can participate in.
Make TV time active time:

- Stand up and fold laundry while you watch.
- Do a few simple exercises like jumping jacks or walking in place, or by doing stretches in front of the screen.
- Make a new rule: No sitting during commercials.

Make household chores count:

- Mop or vacuum fast enough to get your heart pumping. A 150-pound person can burn about 150 calories an hour this way.
- Have young children or pets at home? Playing with them can burn more than 200 calories per hour.
- Yard work and gardening are also ways to burn calories and strengthen your arm, leg, and back muscles. Pushing a lawn mower, raking leaves, shoveling, and other outdoor chores can be an effective workout.
- Use stay-at-home time for projects you may have been putting off. Cleaning out the garage or attic is another way to be productive and active at the same time.

How to eat healthy at home

The American Cancer Society recommends eating a variety of vegetables and fruits, choosing breads, pastas, and cereals made from whole grains instead of refined grains, and brown rice instead of white. Eat less processed meat, less red meat, and fewer sweets, and drink less alcohol.

Eating healthy meals at home helps you cut down on fat, salt, and sugar – and saves money too. If you’re home from work or eating out less these days, consider it an opportunity to try new, healthier ways of cooking and eating.

These ideas may help:

- When you do shop, stock your kitchen with ingredients for easy-to-prepare meals.
- Search for healthy recipes that use ingredients you already have. You can try some recipes from the American Cancer Society.
- Resist the urge to snack during the day. If you’re working from home, work in a room that’s not close to the kitchen.
- If you do nosh during the day, choose something from our list of quick, healthy meals.
snacks, such as fresh fruit or mixed nuts.
• If you have children home from school, get them to help with meals. Preschoolers can fetch items from the pantry or refrigerator and help stir, older children can use their math skills by measuring ingredients, and tweens and teens can take the lead in finding and preparing the recipe.
• If you’re thinking about getting takeout from local restaurants, call and ask for their menu or look it up online so you can make healthy choices.

Nurture your emotional health

Mental health is important too. Read more about ways for cancer patients and their families to cope with anxiety during the coronavirus outbreak. And remember the American Cancer Society is here for you. Call us at 1-800-227-2345 if you need help.

Hyperlinks


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