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COPING WITH COVID-19: GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH AND FITNESS

Rather than focusing on lifestyle restrictions due to COVID-19, let's focus on what we can do for our health. The following are suggested to promote health and nutrition during these times of social distancing.

1. Prepare a supply of nutrition-packed foods

Focus on nutrition-packed foods that remain fresh for one week or more, those that can be frozen, and those that have an extended shelf-life, such as non-perishables and pantry items. Examples include:

- Breads: Corn tortillas, whole grain breads, bagels, wraps, and granola
- Grains: Oatmeal, pasta, rice, quinoa, and pizza dough
- Fruits: Sturdy fruit (apples, citrus fruits) fresh, dried, frozen, or canned in water or juice
- Vegetables: Sturdy veggies (broccoli, potatoes, carrots, onions, squash) fresh or frozen
- Beans and legumes: Canned (black, chickpeas, kidney), and dry beans
- Sauces and spreads: Tomato pasta sauce, salsa, hummus, and peanut or nut butter
- Soups and broths: Shelf-stable cartons and cans
- Dairy products: Milk, cheese, yogurt (plain or greek), and dairy-free options
- Eggs: Fresh or egg whites in cartons
- Nuts and seeds: Assorted nuts as available, and seeds, such as chia seeds and flaxseeds
- Meats: Meats to freeze in portions along with ground meats, patties, and meatballs
- Seafood: Canned tuna or salmon, frozen ready to cook fish fillets, freeze fresh portions

Use online shopping with ship-to-home options. Take necessary precautions and limit visits to stores.

2. Think nutrition

Some additional considerations to promote healthy and balanced nutrition are:

- Limit consumption of frozen and prepared meals and tempting yet nutritionally empty foods
- Consider meatless meals such as chilli prepared with beans in lieu of beef
- To help with keeping costs down, fresh fruits and vegetables can be substituted with canned and frozen options. Choose low-sodium packed-in-water items for a healthier choice.
- Make large quantities to have healthy leftovers, such as soups, stews, and chilli
- Learn new recipes, especially those with few ingredients

3. Maintain routine

Some considerations to help maintain routine include:

- Consistent wake time and bedtime that follows your normal schedule
- Eat meals at regular times
- Maintain a consistent exercise schedule
- Remain engaged in hobbies and social connectedness with family, friends, and colleagues while adhering to social distancing. Consider video-conferencing and web platforms to keep in touch.

4. Stay active

Canadian guidelines advise that we should engage in at least 2.5 hours of “moderate to vigorous” aerobic physical activity each week. Preferably this will take place in increments of 10 minutes or more, with 2 sessions per week of muscle strength training. If you are healthy and are able to do so, the following tips can help you safely exercise while avoiding the gym and maintaining social distancing during COVID-19. If you are using any equipment, be sure to thoroughly clean and disinfect it before and after each use.

a) Spend time outdoors

- Go for a walk, hike, bicycle ride, or dog walk
- Engage in outdoor work whether yard work, gardening, or planting
- Consider outdoor adventures, such as a scavenger hunt with your kids or geocaching
- Enjoy simple sports such as tossing a ball but clean your hands and refrain from touching your face
- Set-up an obstacle course in your backyard
- Attend a local park while maintaining precautions

b) Exercise independently or with adequate space

- Choose non-contact activities, such as hiking and biking, to uphold social distancing
- Meet up at the destination to avoid close quarters, such as carpools

c) Focus on general fitness and wellbeing

- You can focus on core strengthening and cardiovascular conditioning without compromising social distancing by using home gyms, home-based video workouts, and web-based exercise programs
- Most fitness centres are sharing online resources you can use, such as daily workouts that can be done at home with minimal or no equipment
- Fitness applications are available online (e.g., “The 7 minute Workout”) along with online resources such as www.ymca.ca, www.cbc.ca, Instagram (e.g., m2mbarrie, thebodycoach, Natasha.oceane)
- Participate in yoga, as there are countless instructional yoga programs online and most are free

d) Use your body weight

- Use your own body weight with a circuit type program for an effective way to maintain strength and aerobic health in a short period of time without equipment
- Bodyweight workouts incorporate a variety of movements that do not require equipment and include exercises such as burpees, squats, lunges, pushups and yoga.
- Gradually increase frequency, intensity and duration to avoid overuse injuries.

e) Connect to an online fitness community

- Social media channels can help to stay in touch with friends and teammates
- Engage in online challenges with friends, coworkers, or family members to encourage motivation and accountability in your fitness goals. Some examples include number of steps, running a set distance for time, number of pushups in a given period of time, etc.
- Consider sharing your hopes for returning to normal activity as soon as safely possible

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