

# STAYING HEALTHY IN ISOLATION?

## NO PROBLEM

By Dr Ajai Seth, Sports Medicine Consultant



**Make sure you go outside every day.** Lack of sunlight exposure can be detrimental for our mind as well as our body. Physically, our body's vitamin D production is likely to drop by spending more time inside, so maximise every opportunity to spend time outdoors safely (e.g. back garden, balcony).

It may be worth starting 1,000-2,000 IU of Vitamin D a day as a maintenance dose.

**Mix up your exercise routines.** Too much of one form of exercise is never a good idea. Although it may be tempting to dust off the running shoes and run every day, injury is inevitably waiting around the corner.

Start gradually and build up. Mixing aerobic activities such as cycling, running and brisk walking work different muscle groups and varies the forces on the body.

**Strength training is important.** For those of you who are having withdrawal symptoms from the gym, try and do your weight-based/strength training outdoors, using body weight and/or hand held weights (e.g. kettlebells). For those who never do any form of strength training, it's a great time to start.

Doing a 20 minutes Pilates routine can give you a whole-body workout and use muscles you never knew you had. I would recommend downloading your routine on your phone before you leave the house, as you don't want

to waste your precious exercise time buffering 4G or flicking through all the potential videos.

**Rest and recovery is even more important.** Please take the time to stretch, foam roll and have a hot bath. A 10 minute yoga routine at the end of the day will help your body rest and repair overnight and be fighting fit for the next day.

Do not compromise on your sleep and keep your pattern regular, however tempting it may be to Netflix binge if you're working from home!

**Try new things and set goals.** Setting exercise goals can boost motivation and compliance. Whether that's a 5km run time or seeing whether you can hold a plank for a minute. A challenge I've set myself is to be able to do a handstand by the time normality resumes. It may sound silly, but it helps break up the monotony.

**Involve family members.** The social restrictions currently placed on us are unprecedented. However, a part of me is grateful to be able to spend more time with my family.

Use this time to exercise and talk with family members to help create closer bonds (as per gov.uk guidelines of course). Besides, we may never get time like this to spend with our loved ones again...

**Get organised.** Regardless of the fact we may be working from home, I'm sure

your diary has already filled with conference calls and other work commitments. Whether you decide to exercise in the morning, afternoon or evening, make sure you have a dedicated 1 hour in the calendar for exercise, and put it in as a repeating event. Studies have shown that exercise is much more likely to happen if it has been made into a written commitment. Try not to 'fit in' exercise around your busy schedule.

**Look after your mind.** This is a very nervous and anxious time with so much uncertainty. Please take the time to practice mindfulness or meditation, outdoors if you can.

Apps such as Headspace and Calm are great for providing structure for this. I'm sure many of us will find that actually the pace of life may slow down as we escape the rat race for a while and we have time to be more reflective. If you suffer from low mood or anxiety, spending time outdoors in the sunlight is important to avoid relapses in mental health and seasonal mood disorders.

**Be mindful of our food.** What a great opportunity to work on our diets and cooking skills. Don't worry too much about calorie counting but do be aware of snacking, frequency of eating and portion size. Especially as most of us will not be more than 20m from the fridge at any one point in time.