

Why exercise is important for the body

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The the problem with disuse is that it actually can take its toll pretty rapidly. So we know from research that in as little as two weeks of not moving properly or Normally, we actually can start to atrophy, we can lose efficiency in our neurologic system and our neuromuscular connections can start to degrade. And so big concern for healthcare professionals during this time is if everyone in our country assumes a sedentary lifestyle, all of a sudden, then Health care costs down the road could be staggering.

Remember to get up when working from home

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I brought my computer from the HSC last week when we were told to to set up for officing from home, and I do miss I have an adjustable desk. I didn't want people to think I was looting my office by taking that with me. But man, I do miss that. Sitting for prolonged periods of time will lead to a number of postural adaptations that aren't great for long term health can lead to low back pain in particular. One issue we see you may have noticed this when you go for a long drive, it's like you get out of the car and you're sore. It's like I've been sitting for four hours, you know, drove to Dallas, how am I sore? Well, in that time in that flexed position, in particular our iliopsoas muscle or muscles rather, will attenuate they'll have a shortened position, and then when we stand up, it pulls our pelvis forward which unless we're going to lean forward, now we're going to be in what's called lumbar lordosis. So now my back is painful because my hips are tight. So that tightness through the hips from sitting for a long period of time, will manifest itself as back pain. And so I have, you know, since since I've adopted this new, be on zoom all day kind of setup, I will set an alarm or I'll intentionally get up and make sure that I stand for a couple of minutes, walk out in the yard, play with the dogs, whatever. But just don't be stuck in this chair for eight hours because that can lead to a number of bad things. And that's short term. If we're if we're stuck in this holding pattern for weeks or months, as as I've heard, then, again, that that can lead to a number of faulty postural patterns that are going to lead to long term consequences.

How much exercise do you need?

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Most would suggest at least 30 minutes a day would be a bare minimum baseline. A lot of us are in relatively sedentary jobs. And so you know me doing my job as Professor doesn't typically require me to do a lot of heavy lifting or a lot of heavy physical manual labor. But I would use that 30 minutes a day as a bare bones minimum. My kids are obviously home, they have an assignment that they are to do at least 45 minutes of play or exercise or some combination thereof. For physical as well as mental well being. There's a number of studies that that show the connection between the mind and body, and I know that I can concentrate better when I work out regularly. So it's not just a question of, Do I have time? That's always been the excuse, right? Oh, no, I don't have time to exercise. Well, guess what we are all all magically thrown

into this, this pot together, my hour and a half there and back that I usually spend on commute that's gone. So I've got more time to exercise. So I would say start with 30 minutes and work up from there because I find that time spent and exercise means the time I spend in work is actually a lot more efficient and effective.

Simple exercise while seated and setting timers

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Well, if you don't have an adjustable height, desktop, then you can you do a couple of things. Just simple ankle pumps are helpful for good circulation through through your lower extremities especially if you've had something like diabetes or any kind of cardiovascular condition, then blood flow back to the heart is a passive process. And so the way I usually describe it is, if you think about your veins as being buried within your muscles, think about a tube of toothpaste. If I never compressed that tube of toothpaste, I don't help the toothpaste make its way out. Whereas if I'm using the muscles in my calves, I am I am effectively encouraging that blood flow back to the heart. So even something as simple as just toe tappers or heel raises where I'm moving, that's better than nothing. I'm a bit of a nervous fidgeter so that happens for me. Anyway, apart from that, like I said, if you can just set a reminder on your phone or set a reminder, a timer, a countdown timer so that every 30 minutes, you're going to stay and sit down five or six times, that can be a helpful way. Because if you're like me, you kind of get engaged in an assignment or a project. And I tend to lose track of time. So those timers can be a good way of helping me make sure that I don't just lock into the chair and spend hours on end here.

Recommendations for the elderly

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One thing we do at our special populations course at the HSC is we talk about training with the elderly, there are actually some some pretty cool chair aerobics programs that you can access online. Having them go through and do some resistance band work if you have access to that if you don't, soup cans can be resistance of milk jugs or water jugs. can be resistance or just simple bodyweight, the biggest risk for the elderly is fall risk. And so we don't want to put any patient in a circumstance where they might potentially lose their balance and have a risk for for injuries associated with that fall. And so having them seated in a chair might be a viable alternative. You know, ordinarily we would say, machine based exercise would be great because it tends to add stability, whereas free weights require you to have your own stability. But the downside is gyms are closed now. So we don't have that freedom or that flexibility. And so, whether it's doing things from a chair, doing them from a prone or a kneeling position, if they can safely get into and out of those positions, may be some some good alternatives

Apps that can help

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There are a lot of free or relatively inexpensive apps that can be great benefits, one that I actually started using two or three years ago just to take the required thought out of it. Even though I teach rehab and strength and conditioning at the end of the day, I would get home and I realized, you know, the last thing I want to do after teaching students how to develop programs is sit down and write another program for myself. And I recognize that that was a barrier to exercise for me. And so I use an app called Fitbod. FIT BOD. There's another one called Shred that's pretty good. There are countless others. Nike has a running app as well as training app. And most of those have a bodyweight selection within them. And so even if you don't have a benchpress set up or a squat rack or dumbbells, just switching over to bodyweight, you can do a number of things that can help either maintain or in some instances actually improve your fitness level.

Productive physical activity at home

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To be honest with you simple yard work might be a productive way of doing that my son and I mowed and weedeated this past weekend. I have a gate along my back fence that hasn't worked for, I don't know, three or four years and it's it's been on my honey do list all that time. And part of the reason it wouldn't work is that the dirt was too high and the gate wouldn't open. So we got the shovels out, and we moved some dirt around and I can tell you by the end of that I was feeling a little bit so yard work tasks might be effective, sweeping your garage, upper body. housework tasks, vacuuming, you know, there's, there's there, there are a number of things you can do that that are kind of double dip, they give you that benefit of physical activity, but you're also accomplishing things. So the nice part about working from home that I'm discovering is that that 10 minute break that I'm taking instead of me just hopping on the couch back here is as lovely as it is, is just outside that door is my shop and I can go out and sweep the shop and that's physical activity and it's productive because I'm cleaning. So I really like the the ability for what I'm doing in terms of fitness to also be kind of contributing around the house if that makes sense.

Different types of exercise are important

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Certainly walking is still perfectly safe in most neighborhoods. So going for walks, going for runs going for a bike ride can be a great tool for mental as well as physical health. You can't go to the gym, unfortunately, but we've got a set up in our house. I've set a goal of working out every day for at least 45 minutes for as long as this work from home situation carries on and so far um I think I'm on day seven here of making that happen. So, for me it's a it's a mental as much as it is a physical tool. Apart from that you're walking, jogging, biking, resistance training, bodyweight training can be helpful. Even just spending some time, yoga would be a great tool. A lot of times in the weight room. I like to turn the music on whether it's my headphones or the bluetooth

stereo and you know, kind of get rowdy and get excited and lift heavy weights. That's good. But I also find that doing some yoga is beneficial because it's just the opposite. It's quiet, it's it's time to shut out all of the external stresses. Let's face it, the the stress in this situation, we're foolish if we don't recognize it in the room. We're home not just because we want to be but because we are facing unprecedented stressors in our generation. Never in my life have I walked to a grocery store and seen an entire bread aisle completely cleaned out, that's stressful. We are down to one and a half rolls of toilet paper in our house that's stressful. So time spent in yoga, aids flexibility, but it's also a way to quiet your mind and find some peace amidst the chaos. So it doesn't always have to be about just increasing strength. Sometimes it's about just treating myself as a head to toe organism instead of just as a muscle.

Starting slowly and considering personal trainers

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I know this, this entire situation has really caused the fitness industry to take a massive pivot and personal trainers are all out of jobs if they continue to do things the way they used to do. So I know there are a lot of my friends and contacts in the fitness industry who are offering their services for free or reduced rates as kind of a telemedicine type model of training sessions being delivered via zoom and tools like this are relatively common. If you don't have access to that, or you don't want that, then the best advices to start maybe even a little lighter and simpler than you think you need to. And here's where an app like Fitbod or Shred can be helpful, because a lot of them will have a testing section built in. So they'll they'll measure the number of repetitions you can do or the amount of resistance you can tolerate. And then your workout will be built relatively conservatively from there. That way, you're not overdoing it right out of the gate. That way, you're not minimizing your recovery too fast too soon. That's the biggest mistake most people make is they try to either pick up right where they left off the last time they tried to condition or they don't give themselves adequate time for recovery. And so just I would say, we're here for a while, there's no race to fitness here. So start slowly, and focus on being consistent and steady, as opposed to being super aggressive and getting injured right out of the gate. And now we're left without the option of exercise.

The importance of good health during a pandemic

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One thing to consider is maybe trying to connect with whether it's friends from church or family members or whatever. And keeping each other accountable can be a real valuable tool and recognize that that fitness isn't necessarily the the end goal here. Look at it more in terms of a global context, instead of a specific, you know, I'm not training for a bodybuilding competition. I just want to be as efficient, effective and stay healthy along the way. And we also know that, let's face it, we're we're in the midst of a viral epidemic. So this has the benefit of bolstering our immune system. And so it's not just something I'm doing to pass the time. It's not just something I'm doing to help my productivity. It's also something I'm doing to make myself healthier head to toe. And I think, you know, to the extent possible, we owe it to ourselves in

our family members to be as fit as we can, so that we can more, I guess more effectively insulate ourselves from it. You can't completely prevent it, but it could. It certainly couldn't hurt.