

# **Staying healthy in the age of social distancing**

**If you have pain or limitation and live in Greenville-Spartanburg SC, then call the rehab experts at Purposed Physical Therapy at (864) 881-1712 or you can fill out our New Patient Form by clicking HERE and we will call you!**

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Nearly all of us are isolating at home for the good of society. How can we stay physically and mentally healthy during this challenging time?

For many of us, COVID-19 has changed our lives dramatically. Experts are recommending that we work from home and practice social distancing to protect ourselves.

We also need to make sure we're protecting ourselves from poor posture, lack of exercise, and social isolation.

## **Working from home**

Now that many of us are working from home, we need to critically assess our new workspaces. If your chair is from your freshman dorm, it's time to upgrade. If working at your computer leaves you stiff and sore, now is the time to change that.

When you sit at your desk or dining table, your feet should be on the floor and your knees and hips should be level with each other. If you're way off, a footrest can help. Your elbows should be at roughly 90° when your hands are on your keyboard, and if you extend your arm horizontally, you should almost touch the center of your monitor. Many of us will be working from laptops which aren't terribly ergonomic because the keyboard is too close to the screen. If you have a remote or USB keyboard, try elevating your screen so you are looking forward, not down. If that's not an option, change location or your chair choice once or twice a day. If you have an exercise ball - try sitting on that as you work as it allows for lots of fidgeting movement and keeps your posture upright.

It is also important to take frequent breaks (which we're supposed to do at the office too)! According to productivity guru and MIT Sloan Senior Lecturer Bob Pozen, you should be taking a 15-minute break every 75-90 minutes. And "break" doesn't mean you get on Facebook for 15 minutes! Get up, drink water, move around, and give your mind a breather. Do things to stretch and move that maybe you wouldn't do at the office like some yoga poses, jog or do jumping jacks, even cartwheels - as long as you are not on a video conference call - be creative, no one is watching!

Looking down at your cell phone all day can cause neck and back pain. Dr. Kenneth Hansraj, Chief of Spine Surgery at New York Spine Surgery & Rehabilitation Medicine, calculated that looking down at a 45° puts 49 pounds of force on your neck - that's like having a 6-year old hanging on your neck! Keep your phone at eye level to prevent poor cell phone posture and pain. Set timers on your news and social media sites so you don't get lost down the rabbit hole in that forward head posture for longer than 10 minutes.

## **Physical health**

Now that we're practicing social distancing, getting exercise in is harder than ever. However, sedentary lifestyles are associated with increased risk for depression, so exercise is more important now than ever.

You don't need a home gym to get in some exercise. Even a walk around your neighborhood (maintaining a 6-foot distance from your neighbors) can keep your body and mind in shape. Jumping rope and HIIT (high intensity interval training) exercises are great cardio, and yoga can keep you limber. There are plenty of free apps that offer workouts for everyone. Many local studios and gyms are doing live daily workouts on social sites like Facebook or Instagram or even posting them on their websites. It's a great way to get moving in a new way, feel a bit connected and get to know your fitness community.

If you are experiencing pain or discomfort due to bad posture, or you would like help creating a plan for safe physical activity while at home, the Physical Therapists at Purposed Physical Therapy can help. They will create an individualized plan to help you improve your posture, prevent injuries and stay active during this difficult time. Many clinics have telehealth options available now. The bonus of this option is you can show us your work set up via video call and we can demonstrate how to get your neck and back feeling limber again.

## Mental health

Let's face it, isolating ourselves from friends and loved one's sucks. Boredom, loneliness, and uncertainty are par for the course. Beat these emotions with exercise, calling or video chatting with friends, and practicing mindfulness and gratitude. Headspace.com has many free meditation options and Curablehealth.com is an app to help you explore and move beyond chronic pain. We aren't sponsored by these apps but they are two options that are commonly recommended and used in the therapy community. And, while it's important to stay informed, flipping between news channels all day is a surefire way to increase your stress and anxiety levels.

If your emotions become overwhelming or debilitating, it's time to find help. Reach out to a trusted friend or family member, or contact us and we will help connect you with a resource in our area.

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