



Your
Health

Overcoming COVID-19 Anxiety

The COVID-19 pandemic caused near-record unemployment and left many people looking for ways to support their families.

This unfortunate situation during the time of year when we are used to heading out on summer vacations has added extra stress for many people.

There has also been added fear and anxiety about the unknowns of the disease. When will it end? How can I protect myself and my family from it? Fortunately, there are many ways you can cope with COVID-19-related stress to lessen the impact it has on your psychological well-being.

WHAT IS COVID-19 STRESS?

Stress during any infectious disease outbreak can include the following, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Worsening of mental health conditions.



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- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background and the community you live in. The CDC identifies the following types of people as ones who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis like the

COVID-19 pandemic:

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Children and teens.
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors, other health care providers, and first responders.
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use.

HOW TO REACT

There are many ways you can take care of yourself and your community during this unprecedented time. And doing so can actually help you cope with COVID-19-related stress.

Here are some ideas from the CDC to get you started:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media.
- Take care of your body with

plenty of exercise and healthy eating.

- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind and try to do some other activities you enjoy.

Remember that you are not alone in any stress you are feeling. Millions of Americans across the country are in the same boat. Take the time to connect virtually with your friends and family members to keep you active in community.

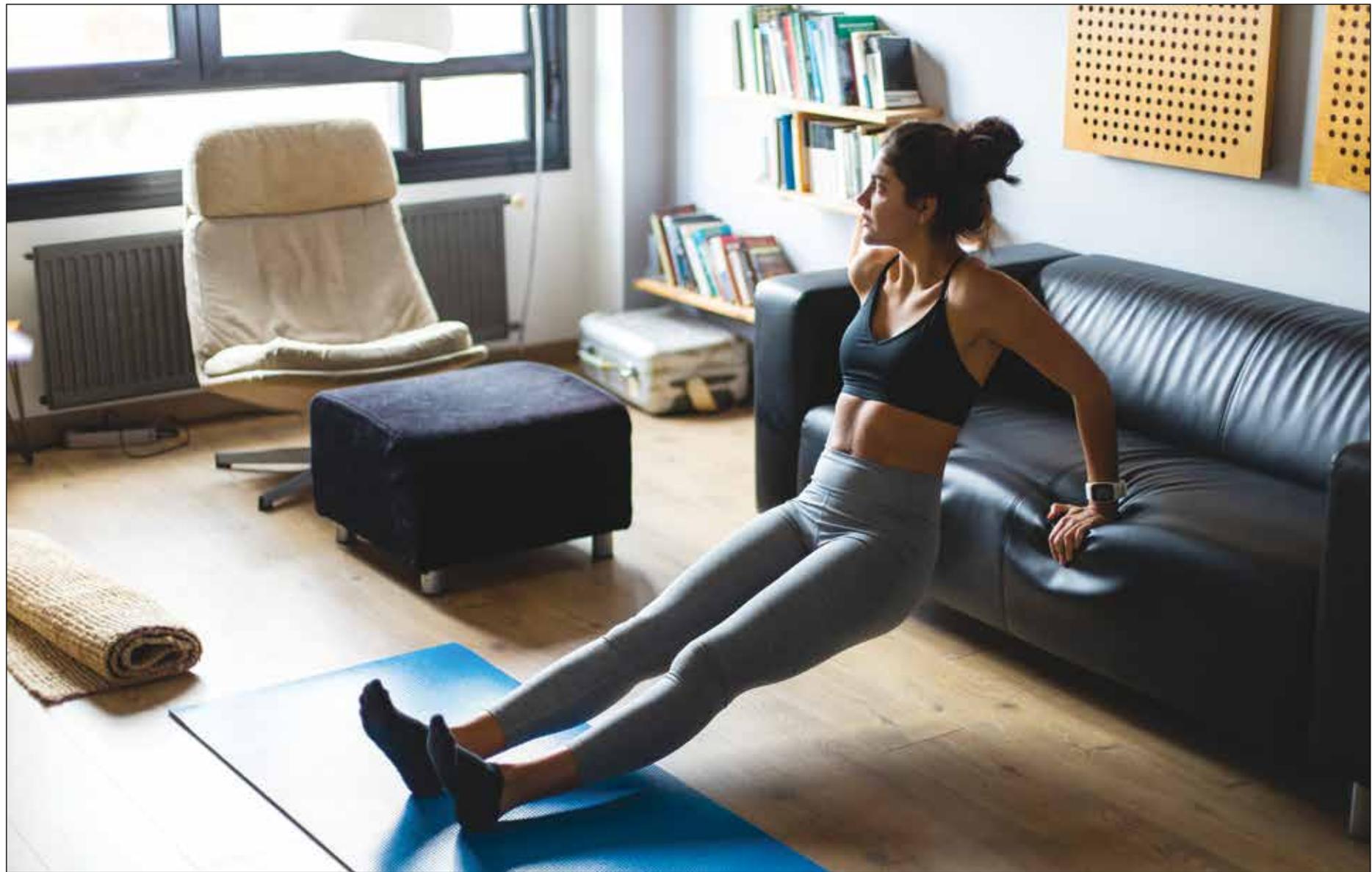
At-Home Fitness Routines

Working out at home is the new reality for many Americans across the country, and thanks to technology, they are able to find creative programs to bring the gym to them.

Many health and fitness companies, as well as local gyms and workout facilities, have created virtual workout programs for their clients that have made it easy to stay in shape.

Whether you're looking for a consistent cardio routine or a high-intensity interval training to keep you in shape, there are many options out there that are easy to weave into your normal day at home.

So, read on for tips and tricks to staying in shape from home.



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CARVE OUT THE TIME

The first step to creating a solid home workout plan is making sure you have the time to properly execute it. Many people find that waking up before the family in the morning can be the best time to exercise. Or maybe you're more of a night owl who likes to work off the stress of the work day after hours. Whenever you choose to work out, it's important that you find a dedicated, uninterrupted time to focus on bettering

your body. Without adequate time, you'll end up burning yourself out and not sticking with your routine.

BODY WEIGHT EXERCISES

When executed correctly, using just your body weight can give you an effective workout routine with great results. Here are a couple of ideas for you to incorporate.

BRIDGE

Lie on your back with your

knees bent, feet flat on the floor, and your arms extended by your sides. Pushing through your feet, raise your posterior off the ground until your hips are fully extended. Slowly return to the starting position and repeat until you have finished a set of 10. Perform three sets for maximum effectiveness.

STATIONARY LUNGE

Split your stance with your right leg in front. Bend your knees and lunge forward,

stopping when your right thigh is parallel to the ground. Then, push up through your right foot to return to the starting position. Repeat for a set of 10 and complete three sets.

EXTENSIONS

Get on all fours and simultaneously extend your left arm and right leg, keeping your hips square to the ground. Pause when you reach the position for five seconds. Return to the start position

and repeat with your right arm and left leg. Do this for three sets of 10.

THINK LOCAL

Your local gym likely has online or video workout programs you can execute at home as part of their workout programs. Ask your local gym owner or fitness staff if this is an option. Many technology platforms offer online tracking and reporting so your trainer can stay updated on your at-home progress.

Eat these Superfoods

The 2020 US Dietary Guidelines recommend healthy eating patterns, “combining healthy choices from across all food groups — while paying attention to calorie limits.”

Research has shown that doing so can reduce risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers. In addition, there are many nutrient-packed “superfoods” that are must-haves in your diet as you work toward achieving health benefits and reducing chronic disease.

BERRIES

High in fiber, antioxidants and disease-fighting nutrients, berries are a sweet addition to any diet. Think blueberries, raspberries and strawberries. Even when they are not in season, you can buy them frozen and add them into your diet for a healthy snack. Eat them plain or add them to yogurt, cereal, oatmeal or smoothies.

FISH

Fish are a good source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids, which help prevent heart disease. Fish with the highest omega-3 content are salmon, tuna steaks, mackerel, herring, trout, anchovies and sardines. Remember that adding loads of butter and salt to your fish



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can cancel out the health benefits.

LEAFY GREENS

Dark, leafy greens are a good source of vitamin A, vitamin C and calcium. They also include fiber and several phytochemicals that can have a positive impact on your overall health. Dark lettuces are great additions to any salad, but don't

forget varieties such as spinach, Swiss chard, kale, collard greens or mustard greens. Sauté them with olive oil or add them to soups and stews for a super addition to your diet.

OLIVE OIL

Speaking of olive oil, this cooking addition is a good source of vitamin E, polyphenols

and monounsaturated fatty acids. All of these can help to reduce the risk of heart disease. You can substitute butter or margarine with olive oil in pasta or rice dishes. Drizzle over vegetables or use as a dressing to reap the benefits of this superfood.

NUTS

Most nuts contain monoun-

saturated fats, which may be a factor in reducing the risk of heart disease. Hazelnuts, walnuts, almonds and pecans, specifically, are great sources of plant protein. You can easily add a handful to oatmeal or yogurt or have as a standalone snack. Consider trying the various types of nut butters such as peanut, almond and cashew, as well.

Benefits of Having a Pet

Owning a pet means more than just having a four-legged friend around the house. It can also mean a healthier lifestyle and increased happiness in your life.

Research has shown that living with pets provides certain health benefits, including lower blood pressure, decreased anxiety and boosted immune systems. So take your pooch for a walk or cuddle with your cat to show them a big thanks for making a positive impact on your life.

HEALTHIER HEARTS

People who own dogs get more activity in their day simply by mixing in walks around the neighborhood. According to the American Heart Association, dog owners are 54% more likely to get the recommended amount of exercise than their non-dog owning counterparts. As a result, and due to a stronger immune system from being exposed to pet fur and dandruff, many dog owners see a decrease in blood-pressure, triglycerides and cholesterol levels. This puts them less at risk for heart-disease.

FIGHTING ALLERGIES

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-

Madison, in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, have found that kids growing up in a home with “furred animals” – whether it’s a pet cat or dog, or on a farm and exposed to large animals – will have less risk of allergies and asthma.

The university has performed recent studies analyzing the blood of babies imme-

diately after birth and one year later. Here are some of the results:

- If a dog lived in the home, infants were less likely to show evidence of pet allergies (19% versus 33%).
- They also were less likely to have eczema, a common allergy skin condition that causes red patches and itching.

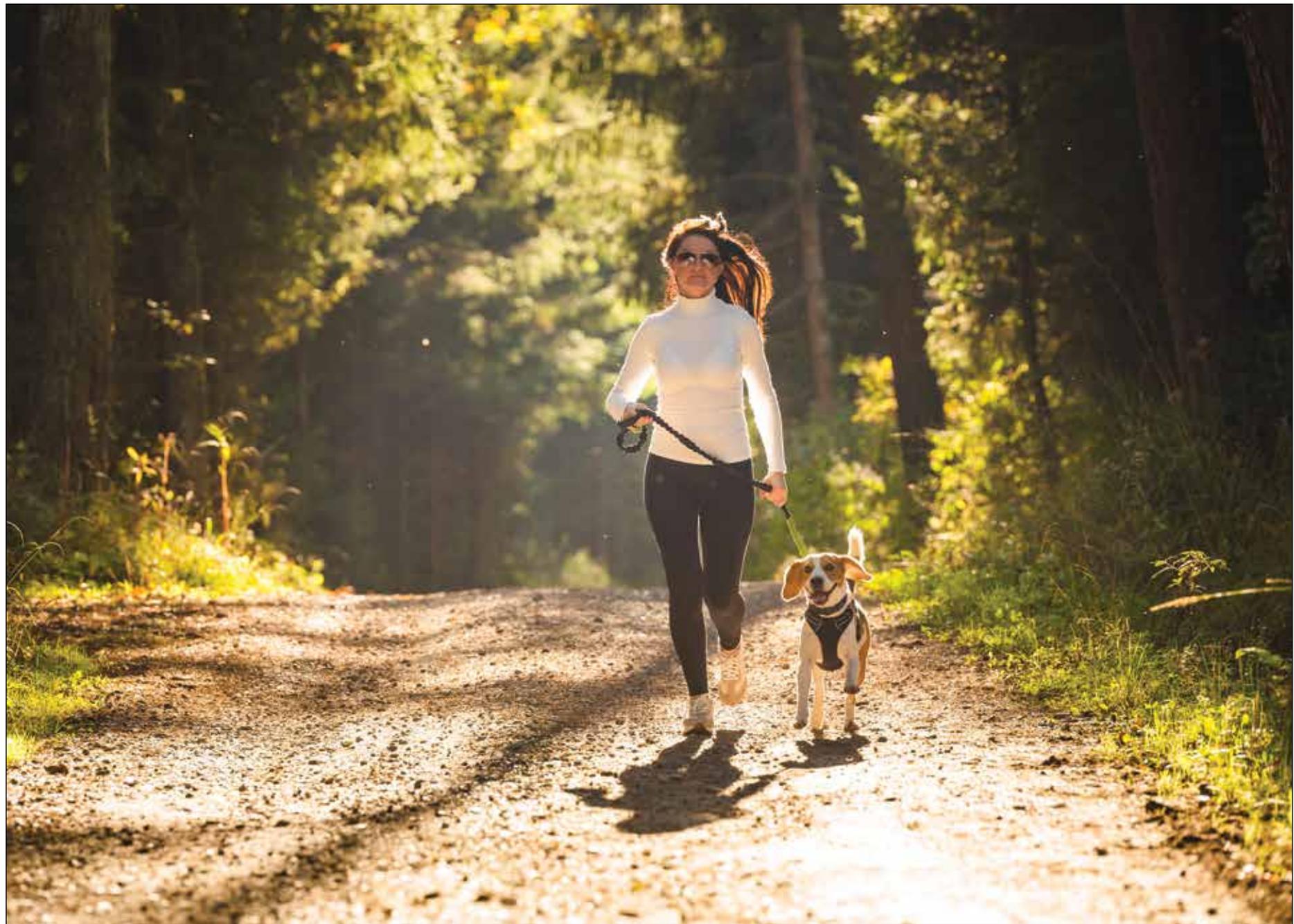
- They had higher levels of some immune system chemicals, which is a sign of stronger immune system activation.

ELDERLY BENEFITS

Studies have shown that Alzheimer’s patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Walking a dog or sim-

ply caring for a pet can provide healthy levels of exercise and companionship for the elderly.

Playing with a dog can elevate levels of serotonin and dopamine, which are nerve transmitters that are known to have pleasurable and calming properties, according to studies by the University of Texas School of Public Health.



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Mix Cardio, Weights

Go to any gym and you'll realize there are two types of people: weightlifters and cardio junkies.

Talk with any fitness coach, however, and they'll tell you that finding a healthy balance of both is the most effective way to build a healthy body, increase muscle mass and improve overall endurance.

There are certainly benefits to focusing on one form of exercise, especially when you're just getting started. For example, people with low muscle mass and high fat mass can start with weightlifting to increase muscle mass and become more efficient at burning fat.

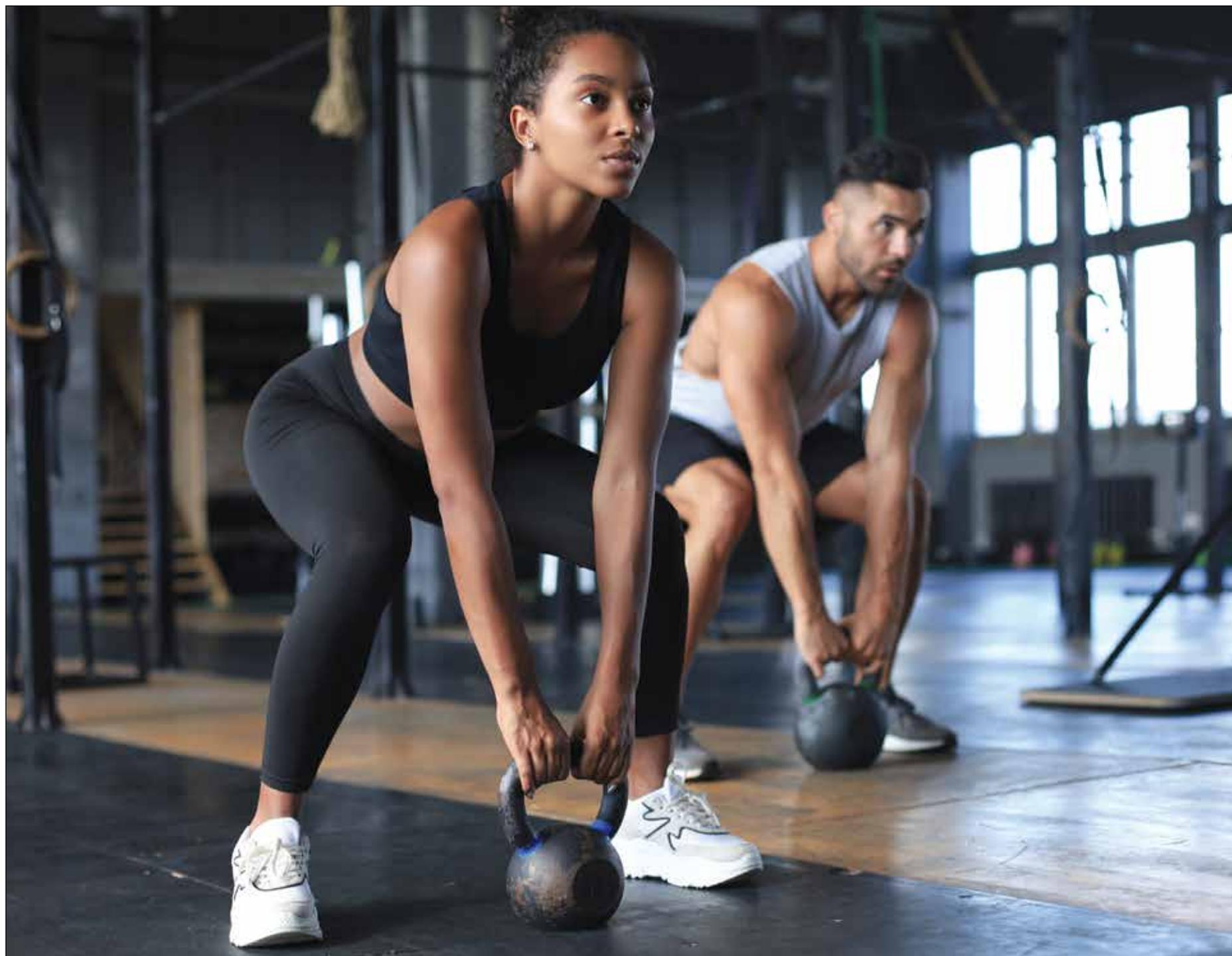
People with high muscle mass but overweight bodies will need to add more cardio versus weight training to get in better shape.

BOTH IS BETTER

Incorporating some form of both types of exercise into your routine is the best way to maximize weight loss. Performing both exercises consistently and balanced can increase your muscle mass, decrease weight and build cardiovascular health. Weightlifting combined with cardio also increases the number of pounds you lose from fat.

ADDING CARDIO

Add plyometrics — or quick bursts of movement that



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increase your heart rate and tire you out — between sets of weightlifting. These can include jump squats, mountain climbers and burpees. Pick one and do sets of 10 in between your weights. You'll notice a big difference and a more complete workout. Another great

way to add cardio is taking less rest time between weightlifting repetitions. This gets and keeps your heart rate up as you work through your weight sets.

ADDING WEIGHTS

Experts recommend a heavy cardio program to include

three to five days per week for a combined minimum 150 minutes of activity. To help maximize your weight loss, consider adding upper and lower body-weight training routines three times per week to your cardio routine.

Another simple way to add

more weights to your cardio routine is to tack on 10 to 15 minutes of weightlifting to the end of your session. Be sure to rotate different areas of the body in order to give your muscles time to fully recover and reap the benefits of the exercise.

Simple Dieting Tips

Dieting can be a challenging experience. In fact, changing your mindset from a short-term diet to a long-term, sustainable behavior change can be key to improving your overall health and well-being.

Like anything in life that you want to improve, consistency is key. Follow the tips below to give yourself a boost in the diet department.

STICK TO A ROUTINE

Eating at regular times during the day helps burn calories at a faster rate because your body gets into a routine. It also reduces the temptation to snack on foods high in fat and sugar – especially late at night.

Choose certain times of the day you'd like to eat your meals and stick to it. Many health experts recommend some forms of intermittent fasting, which can include choosing one eight-hour block of the day to consume food. This gives your body time to process and digest food in a more regular basis. As always, ask your physician if this type of diet could be beneficial for you before engaging in it.

EAT YOUR FRUITS AND VEGGIES

It's been a directive since we were little kids. Fruits and veg-



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etables should be a staple of our diet. They are low in calories and fat, and high in fiber. These are three essential ingredients for successful weight loss. They also contain plenty of vitamins and minerals. There are many easy ways to mix in more fruits in vegetables, including adding small

portions of vegetables to your regular recipes for homemade pizza or lasagna or handfuls of fruit into your favorite smoothie.

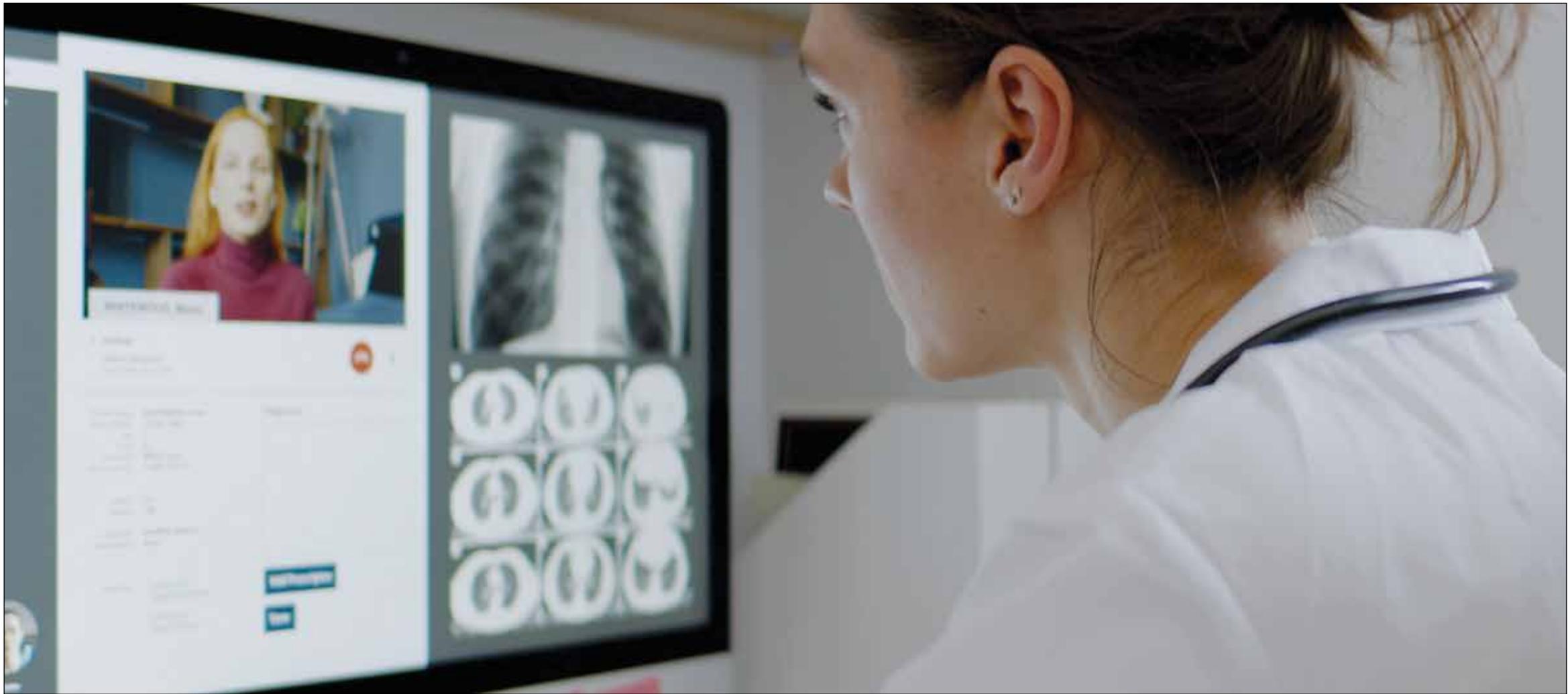
Get creative and try to replace the act of grabbing for a bag of chips with heading to the fridge for a fresh fruit or vegetable.

GET MORE ACTIVE

Regular exercise can add a major boost to your weight-loss goals. Not only does working out improve your overall body health, but it can also keep you honest on your diet. The last thing you want to do is cancel out an early morning 5K with a breakfast of donuts and

high-sugar juice.

Make a commitment to yourself to start adding regular cardio and weightlifting exercises into your routine as you work on improving your diet. You'll be able to notice the results quickly, which can be used as motivation to improve your healthy habits.



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Prepare for a Virtual Doctor Visit

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly accelerated the need for doctor's offices to offer virtual appointments, but this has been a trend in the works for many years.

Technology has made it beneficial – both from a convenience and cost perspective – for physicians to perform regular check-ups online.

On March 17, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services broadened access to Medicare telehealth services to reduce the number of people traveling to and from doctors' offices and other clinical sites.

This has greatly expanded the number and range of providers, conditions and situations where telehealth services are covered. Some states are also expanding options for telehealth to boost social distancing and keeping people safe.

While not ideal for all medical situations, the virtual doctor's appointment is surely here to stay, especially as we come out of the pandemic more focused on social distancing, health and wellness than ever before. Read on for ways to prepare for your next virtual doctor's appointment to maximize the screen time you get with your physician.

CHECK YOUR TECHNOLOGY

One of the first things you'll need to do before your virtual appointment is

to check that you have the right equipment. Most telehealth visits involve a video component, so be sure your smartphone, tablet or computer is connected to the internet. You may also need to download an app or software to connect with the provider. Check with your physician's office to make sure you understand the instructions to avoid any glitches once your appointment gets started.

DOUBLE-CHECK INSURANCE

Check with your insurance company to make sure your virtual appointment will be covered prior to the session. Ask your insurance provider if there will be any co-pay so you can have it ready for your physician's office. Work with a local insurance agent if possible to stay up to date on

your policy's telehealth processes and requirements.

PREPARE LIKE NORMAL

Prepare as you would for any other visit, including jotting down some notes or list any symptoms you want to discuss. This will help you organize your thoughts and prevent you from forgetting anything important during the video call.

To minimize distractions, sit in a quiet, comfortable, well-lit place. This will help you focus on your physician's questions as you work through the appointment together. After the session, be sure to provide feedback to your physician's office. This may be a new offering for them, and patient feedback is key to improving their processes.