

Good health can mean different things to different people—especially during these unsettled times. To help our members get a fresh start in the new year, the Connection asked health experts for their best advice. Whatever your focus, the following pages offer tips for a healthy January and beyond.

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Scaling down

by DR. APARNA CHANDRA SEKARAN



Our lives have undergone a dramatic and unprecedented transformation in the last several months due to the pandemic.

Uncertainty about the future, working from home, curtailed activities, social distancing and masking increased stress. Our new lifestyles led many of us to binge on comfort food, which, along with lack of physical activity and social isolation, is the perfect weight-gain recipe.

Here are some tips on coping with and moving past COVID-19, and tipping the scale in your favor.

Dietary tips

- While working from home, have a set, scheduled mealtime, just as you would at your workplace.
- If possible, do not set up your home office near the kitchen or refrigerator.
- Prepare your nutritious meals and snacks in advance, and have them on your desk.
- Do not fill your pantry and refrigerator with junk food.
- Consume nutritious protein-based meals, fresh fruits and vegetables that improve satiety and keep you full longer.

Exercise tips

- Create a workout schedule. A 30-minute session, five days a week, is ideal for beginners.
- Do aerobic and resistance exercises at home (see Home, sweat home article on how to set up a home gym). In the absence of gym equipment, try brisk walking, using the stairs, jump-rope, squats and online workouts, and/or weight training with heavy books or a gallon of water or a loaded laundry basket.

Behavioral tips

- Practice behavioral modifications to control food cravings by redirecting your mind: go for a walk, meditate or listen to music.
- Try relaxation techniques to keep your mind calm and focused, such as yoga, meditation and exercise, and look into apps and online tools on relaxation.
- Maintain your social circle.
- Follow good sleep hygiene: Stick to your routine, avoid binge-watching late at night and don't use electronic gadgets while in bed.

Medical tips

- Keep up with your medical appointments. Most offices offer telemedicine.
- Comply with your medication regimen and supplements.
- Don't be hesitant to ask for professional help if you see your weight creep up.
- Never try an over-the-counter weight loss medication or a diet plan without consulting a weight loss specialist.

Dr. Aparna Chandrasekaran is board-certified in internal and obesity medicine and is the founder and medical director of Jersey Medical Weight Loss Center, New Jersey.