

COVID-19:

# Tips to Maintain Physical Fitness Amid the Lingering Pandemic

## GO OUT AND PLAY

Maybe we're biased, but summer in Cook County can't be beat. The parks, the beaches, the hidden treasures, and gardens. This is the best time to go for a walk, run or bicycle ride. Coronavirus transmission risk has been shown to be reduced outdoors. While the weather is warm and the days are long, participate in as many outdoor activities as you possibly can. Make up for lost time!



- **Golf** is a great way to get and stay active. If you don't know how to play, [sign up for lessons](#). There are beautiful golf courses throughout the city and [Cook County](#)



- **Playing tennis** will work every muscle in your body and you'll have fun while doing it. Grab a friend and hit a few balls. It may become your new obsession



- **Swimming** is one of the most effective, yet gentle and relaxing, exercises. Aqua aerobics and swimming are safe if physical distancing is maintained at an outdoor pool or other body of water. The risk of transmitting the coronavirus through water appears to be minimal, but the rewards are great



- **Take a hike.** Explore [Illinois State Parks](#) and clear your head instead of watching the news. The fresh air, change of pace and new perspective will prevent doldrums and burnout

These and other outdoor activities will not only help you get back on track, but when done in the sunshine will boost your mood, decrease anxiety, and increase your Vitamin D levels (Research supports the possible role of vitamin D against cancer, heart disease, fractures and falls, autoimmune diseases, influenza, type-2 diabetes, and depression.)

Should the prevalence of coronavirus continue well into the winter, it's important to have your fitness plan already in place. Consider purchasing a stationary bike, treadmill, or elliptical machine. [Chicago Park Districts](#) and the [Forest Preserves of Cook County](#) offer a variety

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of activities for adults and children during the winter months. And finally, if you don't have a dog, consider adopting one. Having a dog to walk means you'll always have a workout buddy, no matter what season it is. [The Anti-Cruelty Society](#), [South Suburban Humane Society](#), and [Evanston Animal Shelter](#) (just to name a few) have dogs that are eagerly awaiting their forever home.

**NOT QUITE READY FOR THE HEALTH CLUB?**

If you're not quite ready to venture out and back to the health club or fitness center, stay home. In addition to videos on [YouTube](#), there are free apps and online fitness platforms you can try. Don't forget to explore the [Blue Cross Blue Shield Well onTarget program](#). The Blue Cross Blue Shield Well onTarget is designed to give you the support you need to make healthy choices. With Well onTarget, you have access to a convenient, secure website with personalized tools and resources.

Gardening, mowing the lawn, vacuuming, or decluttering are other ways to stay active. Your body just wants to move. Even if it's by doing a household chore, you will reap the amazing benefits of exercise and physical activity, as well as a feeling of accomplishment.

The many benefits of exercise have been demonstrated across the lifespan. Our body's systems and organs work better when we are consistently physically active. Find physical activities that you enjoy; you're more likely to remain consistent when the activity is pleasurable.

We are all managing additional stress related to COVID-19, so please consider using physical activity and exercise as a strategy to maintain your mental and physical health during this challenging period. Many things feel beyond our control right now, but we do have the ability to be innovative and build physical activity and exercise into our daily lives. Continue to take protective measures: Wear a mask while in the presence of other indoors, practice hand hygiene, and maintain the suggested social distance of six feet from those outside of your immediate household. Later, we may even reflect on these trying times as the watershed moment when we found new ways to build our emotional resolve and physical health.

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