

**Strategies and Tips for Promoting Wellbeing during COVID-19
Center for Wellbeing
May 8, 2020**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the risk for developing chronic stress, or anxiety, increases. Chronic stress is a biological response to a prolonged period of time in which an individual perceives they have little or no control.¹ It causes the body to release cortisol and adrenaline, hormones that help prepare the body for action. In acute stress, these effects are typically short-lived. But, in chronic stress these effects last longer and contribute to a constant state of physiologic heightened alertness and a variety of related symptoms (e.g., fatigue, headache, difficulty sleeping, digestive problems, irritability, difficulty concentrating, etc.).²

One effective way to mitigate the effects of chronic stress is regular exercise. Exercise increases the body's production of endorphins, can function as meditation in motion, and improves mood.³ Observing the shelter in place and physical distancing recommendations has disrupted physical activity routines, such as going to the gym or taking exercise classes, but it has also decreased overall, everyday activity. Increasing physical activity does not have to be hard to reap the stress-reduction benefits. Simple stretching has shown to have health benefits and can easily be done at home.⁴

Here are some resources to get you started:

- 5 Stretches that Reduce Stress: <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/research/blog/more-stretching-less-stressing?nav=govd>
- Yoga for Stress Relief – 7 minute practice: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qikJRox_2uo
- A Guide to Exercise for Beginners: <https://www.verywellfit.com/fitness-beginners-4157163>
- The Best 15-minute Beginner Workout: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GS_z6FG_jqE
- How to Exercise at Home During Coronavirus Outbreak: <https://www.verywellfit.com/best-ways-to-exercise-at-home-1231142>

For more resources, see “Exercise Tips from UI-COM” at
<https://peoria.medicine.uic.edu/departments/psych/wellbeing/covid-19-support/>

¹ Senanayake, GB & Arambepola, C. Understanding chronic stress: a narrative review of literature. *Journal of the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka*, 2019, 25(1) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4038/jccpsl.v25i1.8196>

² McEwen, BS *Neurobiological and Systemic effects of Chronic Stress*. *Chronic Stress*, 2017, 1(1-11) DOI: 10.1177/2470547017692328

³ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/exercise-and-stress/art-20044469>

⁴ Langevin, H. Making the Case for More Stretching, Less Stressing, 2020 <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/research/blog/more-stretching-less-stressing?nav=govd>