Eat right to counter the “Quarantine 15”

The “Quarantine 15” is a buzzword for weight gained from spending many months stuck inside, filling up on high-calorie comfort foods. Fortunately, making a few tweaks to your habits can start you on the road to a healthier weight. Here are some ideas:

- **Get on the scale, then check in with your doctor** (via telehealth or in-person). Excess weight can be a risk factor for serious illness from COVID-19 and for developing diabetes, heart disease and other high-risk conditions.

- **Stock up on nutrient-rich fruits and veggies.** Keep an apple, banana, or orange in plain sight on your desk or countertop and a container of cut-up carrots, zucchini and other veggies handy for snacking. Keep a stash of fresh or frozen berries to top your cereal, waffles, yogurt and more.

- **Look for simple recipes to sneak veggies into your favorite dishes.** Craving mac and cheese? Slip in pureed sweet potatoes, squash, carrots or white beans.

- **Reach for protein to feel fuller.** High-carb snack foods like cookies and chips can spike, then suddenly drop, your blood sugar, leaving you feeling hungry. Nuts, eggs, milk products, lean meats and other high-protein choices can help you feel full longer, curbing your appetite.

- **Flavor foods minus the fat!** Trade creamy salad dressings for a drizzle of oil and vinegar. When cooking meats, experiment with tasty spicy “rubs” instead of frying or breading. When baking, substitute butter for applesauce. For more ideas: https://blog.healthadvocate.com/2015/11/healthy-baking-substitutions/

- **Don’t forget the other weight control pillars—exercise and stress management!**

Have a medical condition? Seek guidance from your doctor about shedding weight.
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Nourish yourself to flourish

Worrying about the future, overexposure to distressing news stories, and juggling work and home life can quickly result in burnout, lack of energy and motivation. As we continue to look for a sense of normalcy to return, it is important that we make the best of our current situations and continue to adapt and cope. These tips can help.

Eat well. Nutritious foods are key to good health and sustainable energy levels. Strive to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grain foods, nuts, seeds, healthy oils and lean proteins.

Avoid loading up on sugar, caffeine and “junk” foods. While they may provide a temporary pick-me-up, they result in a “crash” that can leave you feeling even more depleted.

Allow yourself to rest—without becoming a couch potato! When life gets tough, it can be comforting to enjoy a moment of relaxation in front of your TV or curled up in bed. However, it is important to balance these activities with movement to nourish your body and mind.

Lose yourself in something you love. Nourish yourself by participating in activities you enjoy. Schedule regular “me” time to ensure you follow through.

Taking breaks from the news and social media for several days, weeks or even months can be extremely nourishing and allow for more time and self-reflection. Also, aim to avoid preoccupation with the actions of others.

Virtual gatherings becoming draining? Politely turn down invitations and suggest alternative ways to connect instead, such as phone, text or even write a letter or send a card!
Helping a senior loved one stay engaged

Helping a loved one who lives alone and without assistance remain healthy and independent is a challenge, especially during the pandemic. Try these tips that include tapping the power of tech tools to help your aging loved one stay safely engaged physically, mentally and socially.

Plan regular walks around the neighborhood. If you’re well and have been faithfully following CDC recommendations, a stroll with your senior loved one while wearing masks and keeping a safe distance can be truly invigorating. It also offers an opportunity for them to wave to the neighbors and share how they are faring.

Share virtual meals. Order food from a meal delivery service to arrive at a designated time. Then talk on the phone or on video via FaceTime or Skype during the meal. Or, try making favorite family recipes together while connecting virtually.

Attend virtual events together. Check out virtual concerts, lectures, live-streaming religious events, and even tours at museums or zoos. Some virtual events provide a way for attendees to “chat” live along the way. If applicable, see if your loved one’s friend or neighbor would also like to attend.

Foster family ties. Your loved one can read aloud to younger kids in the family during a designated story time video call. Or, everyone can read books on their own and share their thoughts over the phone. Try watching the same TV show or documentary at the same time to ignite discussions that span generations.

Is your loved one struggling with loneliness? Look into connecting them to virtual counseling.

Did you know? Older adults who stay socially engaged have better physical and mental health—it can help their brain function and even extend their life.

70% of seniors are now connected to the internet. If your loved one is among them, see if they need help setting up social accounts to help them feel more involved in their family’s and friends’ lives.

For more help, talk to Health Advocate, your health practitioner or a licensed counselor.

Nutrition Month

Good nutrition has less to do with the latest eating trend or buzz-worthy ingredient and everything to do with having a well-rounded diet. It’s easier to achieve than you may think. Visit: https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/features/national-nutrition-month/index.html