

Tips for shifting those COVID kilos

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With lockdown ending, now is as good a time as any to consider making some lifestyle changes to get our physical and mental health back on track.

The past 18 months have been challenging for most of us. It is important to acknowledge that it's okay for environmental stressors to affect our eating habits, after all, we are only human! Similarly, it should be emphasised that foods do not carry moral value.

While some foods may have more nutritional value, food is neither 'good' nor 'bad'. So don't feel guilty or ashamed if you haven't been as mindful of your food choices and eating habits during lockdown. To help, we've compiled a list of handy tips to get you back on track.

Eat a balanced diet

Eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, meat and dairy products is essential for weight regulation. All plant-based foods offer an abundance of both soluble and insoluble fibre, which are important for gut health and help keep you feeling satiated and fuller for longer.

Try to stick to a schedule

Time-block your day from breakfast through to dinner, allocating time for work tasks, exercise, meals and other responsibilities. Not only will you feel more motivated and in

control, but allocating time to work on your health goals will help keep you accountable.

Limit processed foods

Processed and pre-packaged foods are often high in 'empty calories'. These are calories that offer little nutritional value and will not leave you feeling full and satisfied. Often when we eat out at restaurants the foods are usually high in fat, sugar and salt. This is what makes these meals taste so good!

Whilst needed by the body in small amounts, excessive intakes of these nutrients can increase the risk of weight gain and chronic health issues such as fatty liver, diabetes, and heart disease. With restaurants now open, set a goal around how many times per week you will eat out socially.

Limit alcohol intake

While the occasional drink can be central to the way we socialise and relax, alcohol is high in empty calories. When consumed in excessive quantities can make it difficult to maintain a healthy weight range. The metabolism of alcohol can also interfere with the metabolism of important nutrients, so if you want to get the most out of your food, consider reducing your alcohol intake.

Regular physical activity

If you had a consistent workout or exercise plan pre-COVID, try your best to get back to your old routine. Sign back up at the gym or use this opportunity to try something new! Whether it's a YouTube HIIT workout, home yoga, [Pilates](#), [hydrotherapy](#) or circuit training, the endorphins released during exercise will help to improve your concentration, stress levels and overall mental wellbeing.

If you are recently out of lockdown and trying to find the motivation to get started again, the same idea applies to

sticking to a routine or reviewing what you would like to do and trying something different.

Get your 8 hours of sleep

Studies suggest an association between sleep deprivation, hunger hormones, weight gain, and obesity. So, all the more reason to hop into bed for an early night! You'll also notice you have more energy, greater concentration, and lower stress levels.

Try to consider your pre COVID sleep habits and timings to assess how different they are to now, to identify where you can make some improvements to increase your quantity of sleep.

Practice mindfulness

Daily meditation can reduce stress, improve attention and help us be more mindful of our food choices. Whether it's an app (we recommend Headspace or Calm), reading a book or walking outside in nature, take the time to be fully present in an activity you enjoy.

This is equally important for people working from home to help balance feelings of restlessness, and important for people returning to 'regular' life to preserve energy and find a new balance.

For more information or to make an appointment, you can call your [local clinic](#).

None of the information in this article is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your individual circumstances.