

While COVID Infections Spike, Don't Neglect These Aspects of Your Health

The New Year has brought good news and bad news: While vaccines have been approved by the FDA and are already being distributed to some, COVID-19 infections continue to rise across the U.S. and Western Europe.

Certainly the news of vaccines is a great way to start 2021, but even the rosiest of estimates indicate we're several months away from wide access for all.

The reality is we're in for a winter of continued COVID restrictions. But if we have learned anything in 2020, it is that "health" is not just physical, but mental and spiritual as well. Our well-being means striking a balance of caring for our bodies, minds and souls.

As a health care professional, I am urging people of all ages to also be deliberate in caring for their mental and spiritual health. Committing to exercise, healthy eating, safe social interaction and prayer are key habits for weathering this COVID winter.

Staying active and fit is bodily stewardship in action. The "Quarantine 15," referring to weight gain during the coronavirus shutdowns, may sound cute, but it is dangerous. Maintaining physical health is not only a significant differentiator in fighting infection, disease and other bodily ailments like pain, but it contributes to mental health by boosting energy and combatting depression.

It is critical to maintain a regular exercise routine despite falling temperatures. Being outside and staying a safe distance from others greatly reduces the risk of COVID

infection. So why not think of exercise as a conduit for fellowship? Arrange to walk, hike or get together safely for outdoor workouts with friends to combat social isolation and take care of your body.

It may be harder than it used to be, but it's imperative that we continue to nurture relationships and deepen our Christian community. Adapt your former meals or coffee dates to walks and talks. Spend time together outside for prayer and exercise.

And, when bundling-up just doesn't cut it anymore, take advantage of the abundant fitness coaches and classes on YouTube or Instagram. Many are free and the variety of ways to stay moving are limitless.

Finally, tending to our spiritual lives is essential in times of uncertainty. As Christians, we know that all of the hand sanitizer in the world will not protect us from illness and disease. Suspension of in-person church services can leave many of us feeling lost at sea when it comes to guidance and structure over our spiritual lives. Developing a prayer plan and committing to reading the Word daily is imperative to cultivating peace in times of turmoil.

I know first-hand the impact of prayer on alleviating anxiety. Medi-Share, the health care sharing ministry where I work as medical director, firmly believes that prayer is an indispensable partner to medical care, and we offer prayer to our members who call in with questions.

For those who don't have access to this kind of support, find a prayer buddy or two. If you're not comfortable meeting in-person, try a prayer Zoom call. And stay close to the Word of God by regularly reading your Bible.

As we all work to stay healthy, it's important to remember that our health is multidimensional. Healthy bodies are gifts from God, and as with other gifts, we have a responsibility to

care for them. We can sanctify these challenging times by growing in the virtue of self-discipline—commit to exercise, eating well and scheduling quiet time.

While we cannot control how long the coronavirus will be a concern, we can focus on what we can control: tending to the body, mind, heart and soul to care for ourselves and the ones we love. {eo}

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