

# KEEPING ACTIVE AMID THE LOCKDOWN

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The COVID-19 pandemic has seen countries around the globe going into lockdowns. In Singapore, we had the circuit breaker (CB) measures between April and May 2020 to prevent and minimise the spread of the virus. This was also the period when some lamented that they put on a considerable amount of weight due to constant snacking and lack of exercise. Yet, there are many others who have adapted and found new ways of keeping themselves fit and healthy.

## Basic brisk walking for everyone

To begin, I must first confess that I am neither a health fanatic nor a fitness enthusiast. I have had my fair share of “couch potato” moments and need constant self-reminders to get up and exercise. But having exercise buddies (my mum and sister) really helped to keep me in check and motivate me to take that first step out of the house.

Before the pandemic hit us, my exercise routine would involve brisk walking at night around the park connectors (PCNs) in my neighbourhood about five times a week, for a distance of about five to six kilometres over an hour or so each time. Sometimes when I was just too tired, I wondered if I was really just strolling. However, I was glad that the CB measures allowed us to continue to exercise in the open and I made it a point to do so throughout those two months.

Simply attired in a T-shirt and shorts with a pair of soft and comfortable walking shoes (and not forgetting my mask), I would commence my daily exercise routine in the dark, at an hour when I really wished to be lazing around at home. But as the old Chinese saying goes, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” (千里之行，始于足下); once I overcame the inertia and took the first step out of my comfort zone, the rest of it was quite a breeze. On my brisk walking journeys, I get to enjoy the greenery in the form of tall shrubs, trees and bushes, all dimly lit by lamp posts, creating a serene and surreal feeling. Best of all, there is the opportunity to take in some fresh air and enjoy life outdoors, away from an air-conditioned environment. I often see the same group of people exercising, most of them jogging or running while checking their vitals on the latest health apps. These familiar faces reminded me that exercising is akin to a slow marathon; we need to put in conscientious ongoing efforts to make it part of our daily routine. In the initial stages during CB, the PCNs were mostly deserted. But

as we entered Phase 3 of reopening, activities have mostly resumed and we often see families bringing their little ones out to play and people walking their dogs leisurely. Of course, not to be forgotten are the busy food and goods delivery personnel riding their bikes as they go on their way to complete delivery missions.

## Expanding one’s exercise options

However, when rain and storms came, my brisk walking plans would inadvertently be thwarted. In the past, I would usually take it as a sign that it was time to lay back at home and enjoy some quiet time. During the CB period however, I decided to try something different – doing fitness workouts at home. With the ongoing safety measures, this was a reasonable alternative for those who would much prefer to stay at home and avoid the crowds. For me personally, it served as a plan B for rainy or “I don’t feel like going out” days.

Just simply search for fitness workouts on YouTube and you get tons of video results ranging from yoga to dance. I scrolled through a few top hits before settling on one that incorporated dance movements into the routine – a Zumba workout! The exercise regimen is a 30-minute workout that is both intense and energising. So instead of putting on my walking shoes and preparing to go out of the house, I laid out my newly bought yoga mat in front of my laptop and got the video playing. The Zumba instructor was chirpy and

bursting with energy, and with other participants following along in the video, it felt like a group workout and that I was not alone in this.

After doing some initial stretches to warm up, things just got started really fast. With upbeat Latin music in the background and the lively instructor giving short quick instructions on the moves, I was busy coordinating my steps with what was shown on the laptop screen. Not one with good hand-eye coordination when it came to dance, I did my best to familiarise myself with the different moves. With various consecutive steps, jumps, squats and hand movements, I was breaking into a sweat and heating up just a mere five minutes into the workout. By the 15-minute mark, I was already panting, palpitating and perspiring profusely. I rested during the short break and had a few gulps of water. As the workout continued, I wiped my sweat off and tried to focus on it, doing my best to mirror the instructor's steps while modifying the moves when they proved to be too difficult. You can imagine how glad I was when the timer showed that 30 minutes was up. I clapped enthusiastically and beamed as a sense of achievement engulfed me. I successfully finished this intense workout, yay!

### A reminder to have a balanced lifestyle

Alas, keeping fit is not just about exercise, it also involves the right kind of diet. During the CB period, I got to eat more home-cooked food, thanks to the fact that my sister was working from home. My mum sometimes joked with others that she spent virtually all her time in the kitchen over the last year, whipping up different dishes for lunch and dinner. How I appreciated that at the end of a hard day at work, I got to munch on delicious greens, drink warm tasty soups and enjoy other simple home delicacies that were also healthier and nutritional. Life is indeed full of bliss!

Finally, we need to set aside time to unwind and have some "me-time" for overall wellness. So don't forget to engage in your favourite hobbies and spend time with your loved ones. Get up now and start moving your way to a healthier life ahead! ♦

# MORE HOME FITNESS TIPS

The 2020 circuit breaker forced us to be creative in how we kept fit. In the days and months since, many innovative online fitness programmes have sprung up, taking advantage of technological advances to help us keep fit anywhere, anytime. Here are three such programmes readers can consider adding to your fitness routines!

## 1 ➤ All-inclusive fitness and health programmes

Featuring home workout videos, meal plans and active communities, these programmes offer an all-in-one solution to staying trim and fit from the comfort of home. Workout programmes are tailored to all levels from beginner to advanced, and offer anything from Pilates to boxing. Manage your nutrition as well with their meal plans and recipes to really keep your health and fitness in check.

## 2 ➤ Online personal training

With the advent of Zoom and other videoconferencing technologies, personal training has also gone online. Most of the big gym chains now offer online personal training, where you can tailor a programme according to your fitness goals and book sessions with your favourite trainer, with flexible timings to suit your busy schedule.

## 3 ➤ Bodyweight workouts

Sometimes, you don't need to go to the gym to work up a good sweat. Bodyweight exercises utilise your own weight, instead of gym equipment, to create resistance. Done correctly, bodyweight workouts have been shown to improve strength and endurance, and have the potential to burn many calories. A full workout alternates between periods of rest and work, making it similar to high intensity interval trainings. Check out three bodyweight workouts at <https://on.ft.com/3xLo12U>.

