

[IMAGE]

A Roadmap to Health and Wellness

By Editorial Staff

You might be blinded to it right now; and in fact, it may take some time to realize it. But eventually, most of us will appreciate that the past few months of "shelter in place" haven't been totally negative, particularly in terms of giving us a roadmap to true, lasting health and wellness. Here are five health benefits of the "shutdown" that will pay dividends in the years to come:

1. *Time Outdoors*: Spending time in the Great Outdoors never felt so amazing until we were told to stay at home and not go anywhere. No gyms, remote work, limited entertainment options; all that and more has created a deep-seated need to go *somewhere; anywhere* but the houses we've been cooped up in for weeks on end. And many people have done it as much as possible, from walks around the neighborhood to biking, hiking and more. Sometimes, they've done it with family ... you know, the family you usually can't find time to spend time with.
 2. *Healthy Eating*: Many fast-food and dine-in establishments have stayed open during the pandemic for takeout and delivery, but that doesn't mean regular customers have taken advantage. Fear, complacency and a general "let's stay at home until this blows over" attitude have meant more people are making meals at home – often healthier than fast food. (When you're sitting at home all day, cooking a meal from scratch suddenly isn't so daunting.) Growing awareness of the immune-boosting benefits of healthy eating, among other lifestyle factors, has also served to promote dietary changes for the better.
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3. *Exercise Options*: Day after day, month after month, year after year, you've trudged to the local gym. But suddenly, gyms shut down. And just as suddenly, many people found ways to stay in shape – and get into even better shape – that were more diverse, productive, time-saving and in some cases, even more enjoyable than time at the gym.
 4. *Staying in Touch*: A *To Your Health* editor we know was notorious for not staying in touch with his immediate family, despite feeling perpetually horrible about it. When COVID-19 came to town, his perspective – and motivation – changed for the better. Several FaceTime calls and Zoom meetings later, his psychological health is soaring because he reached out, rather than continuing to avoid. "We're in this

together" isn't just a mantra; it's a wake-up call to connect more.

5. *Better Hygiene*: If we've learned two things from the coronavirus scare relative to hygiene, it's that 1) Constant hand-washing and sanitizing isn't necessarily the best way to live; and 2) We all should be paying more attention to hygiene than we probably were before COVID-19. We're not saying you need to shower in sanitizer every minute or live in a bubble; but we certainly can all wash our hands a little more, avoid sneezing in public, stop touching our faces all the time, and curtail some of the other common hygiene behaviors (or lack thereof) that have been compromising our health long before the coronavirus made its grand entrance.

COVID-19 has put our health at risk, particularly the elderly and others with weakened immune systems. But it's also given us a roadmap for future health and wellness if we learn from it. Change is scary, but it also creates opportunity. Take advantage of that opportunity to become a better you.

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