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**SPECIAL ISSUE: THINKING AHEAD
TO OUR NEW NORMAL**

YOUR HOMEMADE FACE MASK GUIDE

HOW TO IDENTIFY (AND KEEP!) THE
POSITIVE SHIFTS YOU'VE MADE

NAVIGATING INTIMACY DURING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

HOW TO HEAL YOUR DRY HANDS

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YOUR HOMEMADE FACE MASK GUIDE

Are you confused about whether or not you need to wear a mask when you leave your house? We hear you! Keep reading for current recommendations regarding homemade masks, plus simple step-by-step instructions for making them.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT GUIDELINES?

Federal and provincial health authorities now recommend that even people who are not showing symptoms of COVID-19 wear non-medical, homemade face masks as an additional measure to protect others against the spread of coronavirus.

DOESN'T MY MASK PROTECT ME?

There is no evidence that homemade masks protect the wearer from incoming viruses including COVID-19. Wearing a homemade mask in public can, however, help prevent asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 from unknowingly spreading the virus to others.

Masks can provide a false sense of security to wearers, as well as lead to increased touching of the face to adjust the mask. When you wear homemade mask, continue to practice the three most effect methods for preventing COVID-19 transmission: avoid touching your face, wash your hands regularly and effectively, and practice physical distancing.

WHEN SHOULD I WEAR A MASK?

Homemade masks are best used when travelling to public places such as the grocery store or pharmacy, or when using public transit.

Here's an easy way to remember how homemade masks work:

WHAT ARE THE BEST PRACTICES FOR USING HOMEMADE MASKS?

- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after putting on or taking off your mask
- Always handle the mask by its straps, not the face shield
- Put on your mask before leaving your house; putting it on right before entering a public place increases the risk of contamination
- Wash your homemade mask after each use either in the washing machine or by hand, using detergent and water that is at least 30 degrees celsius; do not use bleach
- Masks should be made using dense fabric that passes the light test: hold your fabric up to a light – if light passes through easily and you can see the fibres of the fabric, it is not dense enough
- Masks should be made of cotton; ideal fabrics include high thread count bed sheets (600+), flannel, t-shirts and bandanas
- The more layers your mask has, the better it will filter out particles; we suggest using 2-4 layers of fabric
- It is vital that your mask fit comfortably so that you do not need to adjust it – and touch your face as a result – once you put it on

While we must save the supply of medical grade masks, such as surgical masks and n-95 respirators, for healthcare workers, we can craft our own DIY masks at home. See our tutorial on the next pages for three different types of masks you can make at home.

MY MASK PROTECTS YOU.



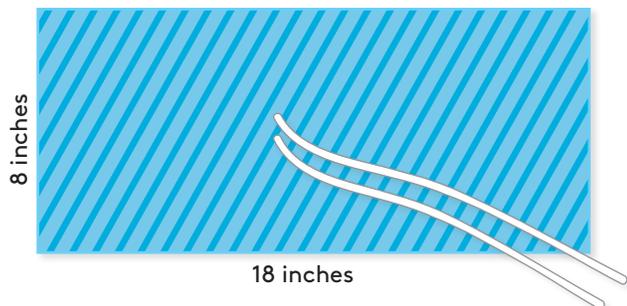
YOUR MASK PROTECTS ME.

Resources:

1. BC Centre for Disease Control. 2. New York Times: DIY Face Mask. 3. US Centre for Disease Control and Protection

HOW TO MAKE A FABRIC FACE MASK

Mask that secures behind the head (This size is for an average adult. See additional sizing below.)

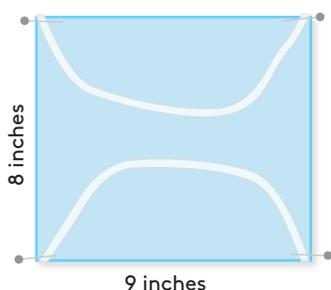


CUT FABRIC

18x8 in/46x20 cm (cotton or flannel, pre-washed and dry)

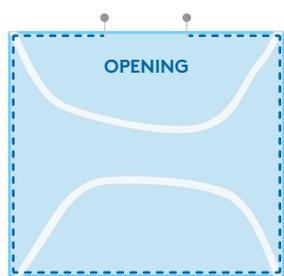
CUT 2 PIECES OF ELASTIC

13 in/33 cm (1/4 or 1/8 in wide)



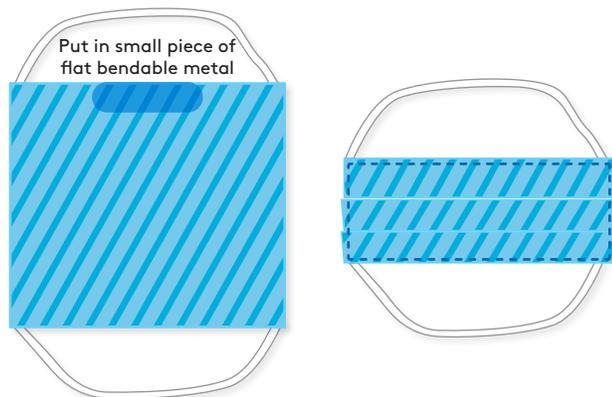
SANDWICH AND PIN ELASTIC

- Fold fabric in half with right sides of fabric together.
- Sandwich the two elastic pieces between the fabric layers.
- Pin each end to the longer fabric side corners.
- Make sure the elastic is not twisted!



SEW PIECES TOGETHER

- Sew around the mask with an 1/2 inches seam allowance, leaving a 2-3 inch opening.
- As you get to the corners, sew forward and back to secure the elastic in place. Make sure each elastic piece is angled into the corner of the fabric, and that you don't sew over other parts of the elastic as you go around.
- Remember to leave an opening to insert optional (foldable) metal piece.



PIN AND SEW PLEATS

- Turn mask right side out.
- Fold fabric to create 3 evenly spaced pleats and pin. Top stitch around, sewing pleats in place.
- Finished mask will be 3-3.5 inches tall.

YOU'RE DONE!

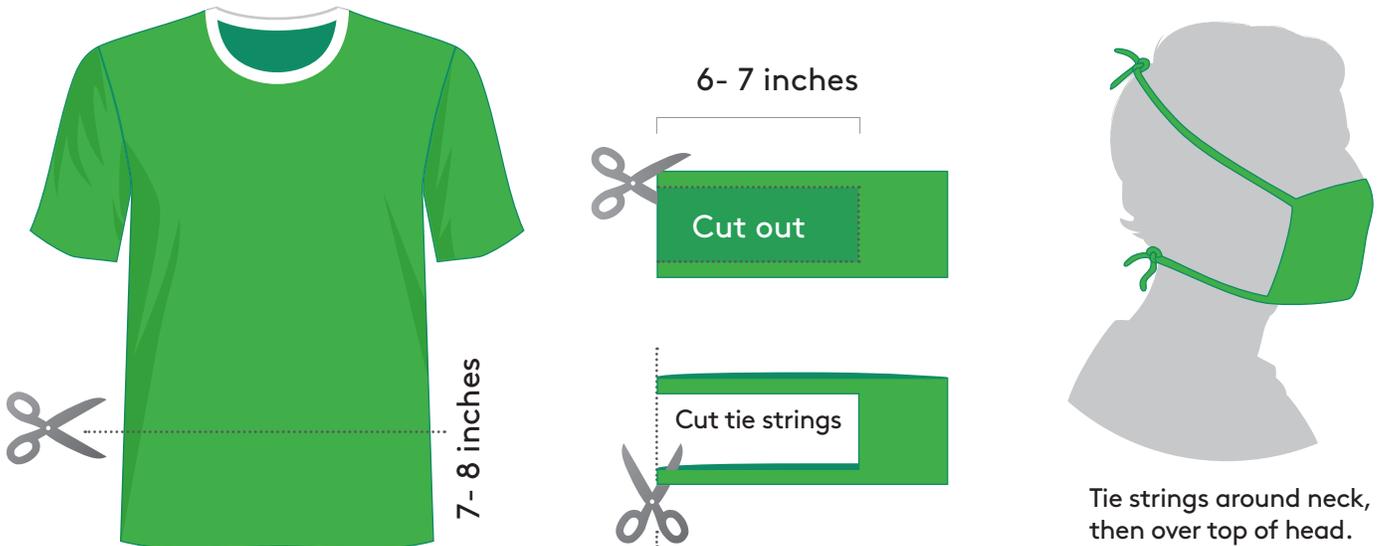
ADDITIONAL SIZING

	FABRIC	ELASTIC
Small Adult	8x8 in (20x20 cm)	12 in (30.5 cm)
Teen	8x8 in (20x20 cm)	11.5 in (29 cm)
Child	7x7 in (18x18 cm)	11.5 in (29 cm)

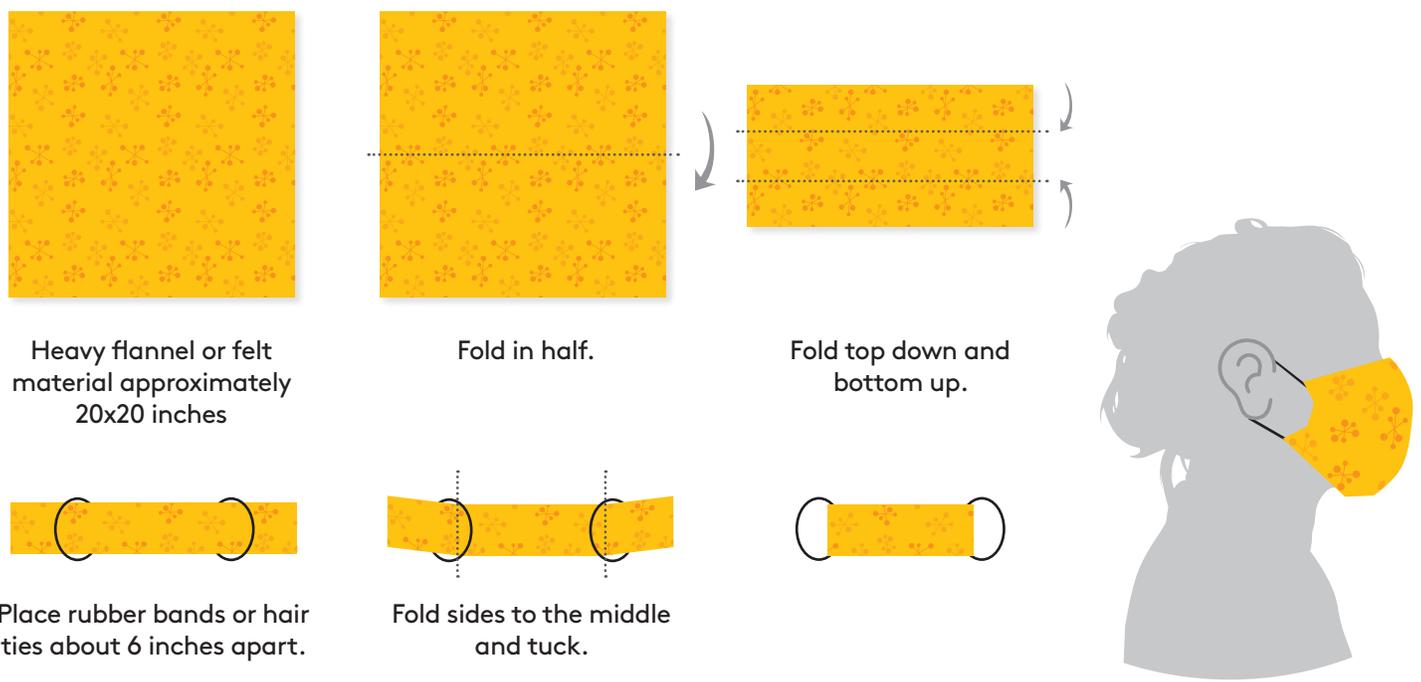
ADDITIONAL IDEAS

To help the mask mold better around your nose, you may insert a pipe cleaner, floral wire, or small piece of flat bendable metal to the top inside the mask before forming the pleats. Sew a topstitch next to it, to hold it in place. Instead of elastic, use T-shirt material to make 4 ties, each 15 in long.

QUICK CUT T-SHIRT CLOTH FACE COVERING (NO SEW METHOD)



Bandana cloth face covering (no sew method)



Homemade face masks are not a replacement for personal protective equipment. Wearing a homemade mask will not protect the user from contracting COVID-19, and is only one of many steps we can take to reduce transmission rates. The most important thing we can do to lessen the spread of COVID-19 is to practice social and physical distancing, and stay home. This is an educational tutorial only.



HOW TO IDENTIFY
(AND KEEP!) THE
POSITIVE SHIFTS
YOU'VE MADE

Saying this pandemic has been full of challenges is like saying the desert is dry. But for many of us, whether we realized it or not, it's also cultivated some positive lifestyle shifts born out of necessity and stillness.

It might be a new self-care practice, more time spent cooking, frequent FaceTimes with loved ones who live far away, regular family dinners, or a simple absence of busyness. These deeply personal changes are different for each of us, but identifying them – and keeping them going once the COVID-19 pandemic ends – is one more challenge we should all take on.

The world will soon start to move more quickly again (we're crossing our fingers, too), so let's use this fleeting period of slowness to ask ourselves what kind of life we want to return to. Here are some strategies for preserving your positive COVID-19 shifts for the long haul:

WRITE DOWN YOUR SILVER LININGS.

Ironically, the slower pace of the last few weeks may have caused our thoughts to go on overdrive and get stuck in a repetitive loop of worry over food, finances and family, among other things. This is understandable, but it's important to strive to find the silver linings in what we're experiencing. Try taking 10 minutes to identify and write down the parts of your new daily life that make you feel good. It could be a hot bath, a virtual hangout with your friends or the new recipe you tried recently and loved; or perhaps it's your daily walks, a new app on your phone, or a friendship you've forged from a distance with a neighbour.

TURN THEM INTO HABITS.

Now that you're looking at a list of things – big or small – that have had a positive impact on your COVID-19 life, it's time to

turn them into habits by scheduling them and repeating them on a regular basis. Studies show that setting visual reminders increase the likelihood of maintaining good habits (for example, set an alarm on your phone, write it down on a post-it note on your fridge, lay out your exercise clothes the night before, or add an activity to your calendar). Another proven way to stick to positive shifts is to share them. Telling someone about the habits you plan to keep practicing can help you stay accountable, and even inspire others to join you.

PLAN FOR JOY.

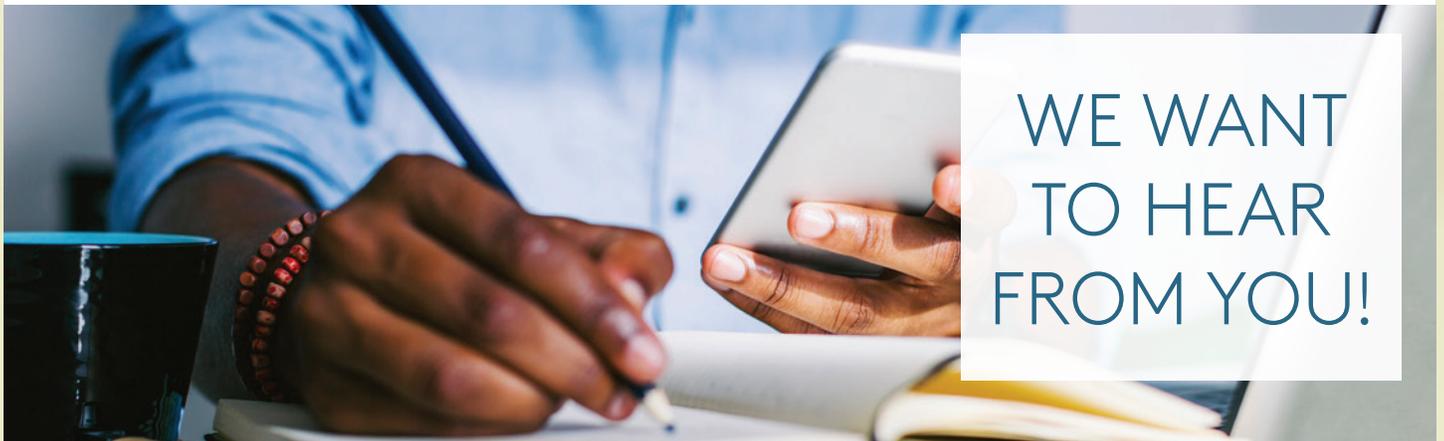
In addition to maintaining the new habits that have helped you get through these times, it's also an ideal time to reflect on what you miss most from your pre-pandemic life. Have you been longing for a coffee date with a good friend? A visit to the library to refresh your reading list? Having your whole family around your dinner table again? A weekend spinning class? Commit to prioritizing the social and community connections you've been craving once they're possible. Let's make plans to savour the things that bring us joy – the things that matter most to us – so that we don't take them for granted again.

Are you struggling to see the positives right now?

It's normal to feel worried, but if negative thoughts seem to be taking over, it's time to seek professional support from your primary care physician or your *virtual care provider*.

Our friends at TriFit also share some great positivity strategies in their webinar, Power of Positive. [Check it out here!](#)

Medisys is always publishing downloadable content, articles, webinars (and much more) to help support our community and clients.



WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM YOU!

If there are specific COVID-19-related topics you want to learn about, whether through a webinar or articles, please [click here](#) to fill out a quick survey.



NAVIGATING INTIMACY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

By Dr. Jaleh Shahin, Registered Psychologist, Medisys Health Group

With the emphasis on physical distancing these days, we are adapting to new ways of working, socializing and connecting. In the recent weeks, I have received many questions about intimacy, dating and sex. Whether you find yourself spending a lot more time with your partner, or you're single and would like to explore dating in the physical distancing era, here are some tips for navigating intimacy during these challenging times:

1) FIRST, CONSIDER THESE NEW REALITIES

We all respond differently to stress and uncertainty. While some may use sex and intimacy as a way to connect and relieve stress, others may notice a reduction in their libido and find that intimacy is the last thing on their minds. Both of these responses are completely normal. It is critical that you have an open and honest discussion with your partner about their interest and comfort level before engaging in any intimate activity.

It's also important to remember that COVID-19 can be transmitted via respiratory droplets from close contact with an infected person, as well as by touching a surface that has the virus on it and subsequently touching your face. Currently, we do not have evidence to suggest that the virus can be found in semen or vaginal fluids. There is some evidence, however, that the virus can be found in saliva or feces.

There is still a lot that we do not know about the virus and our understanding of it continues to evolve. The following suggestions for single and partnered individuals are based on our current knowledge, which may change over time.

2) IF YOU'RE SINGLE AND LOOKING TO EXPLORE ROMANTIC OPPORTUNITIES

Physical distancing has meant that bars, restaurants, theatres, fitness facilities and any large gathering places are closed. So, unless you have managed to master the art of dating in the grocery store line, six or seven feet apart, while wearing your homemade mask, in-person dating presents a unique challenge these days.

If you are single and would like to pursue dating, consider going online. If you have found someone you are interested in and would like to go on a date, consider going on a virtual one. Have a coffee via video chat, try cooking "together" while in your separate kitchens, share a virtual meal or play an online game. Engage in phone conversations like we used to do before texting became our dominant method of communication, and use this opportunity to get to know each other better.

Following physical distancing guidelines means that you are keeping at least two meters apart from those who you do not live with. If you and your new partner would like to explore the sexual side of your relationship, there are other ways to do so while maintaining your distance.

3) IF YOU'RE PARTNERED AND NOT LIVING TOGETHER

If you are in a relationship and living apart or you have an intimate partner who does not live with you, it's important to follow physical distancing guidelines despite its real challenges. Consider using this time as an opportunity to focus on nurturing the emotional intimacy in your relationship – focusing on each other's needs and dreams, and supporting each other during this unprecedented time in your lives.

There are also other ways you can engage in intimate expression in your relationship while maintaining your distance. Keep in mind that you are your own safest sexual partner. Masturbation does not increase your risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

If both parties are interested, comfortable and consent to it, explore incorporating technology into your sex life. Be mindful of risks associated with security and confidentiality with the use of technology and only proceed with what you are comfortable with. Fantasize, allow your imagination to guide you, and use the anticipation to your advantage. Remind yourself that the more diligent we are with physical distancing, the sooner we can tackle the pandemic.

4) IF YOU'RE PARTNERED AND LIVING TOGETHER

If you and your intimate partner live together, already share a bed and show no signs or symptoms of illness, your risk of exposure is unlikely to change if you engage in intimate activity. It is recommended that you continue to engage in diligent hand washing and wash any sex toys used with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after use.

If you or your partner who you live with fall within a high-risk group (for example, a healthcare worker or someone with a high exposure to the public), the decision and level of risk you are comfortable with is up to you. There is evidence that individuals may carry the virus before they show symptoms, or may not show symptoms at all. Therefore, it is possible that engaging in close contact and intimacy will spread the virus. There are currently no specific guidelines on this, so it depends on you and your partner's comfort, risk tolerance and boundaries.



HOW TO
HEAL YOUR
DRY HANDS

For weeks, medical experts and governments have reminded us that washing our hands frequently is the best way to protect ourselves from and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The #20SecondChallenge and #WashYourLyrics challenges were even born to help us find something other than “Happy Birthday” to sing as we scrub! While we must keep up this life-saving practice, there are ways to mitigate the havoc it’s wreaking on our hands.

Whether you’re using water and soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizers, you’re likely experiencing dry and cracked hands as the oils and wax that normally maintain moisture and protect the

skin are stripped away from repeated washing. Some of us may also be suffering from *irritant contact dermatitis* of the hands – a form of eczema that produces itchiness, redness and/or painful cracks or blisters – thanks to ongoing exposure to detergents found in many soaps and sanitizers.

Dermatological issues are one of the most common subjects of consultations on the **Akira by TELUS Health app**; we spoke with April Stewart, the platform’s NP National Lead and Manager of Clinical Operations, to glean some tips for minimizing damage caused by hand-washing and for healing our dry hands during the coronavirus pandemic.



TO MINIMIZE HAND-WASHING DAMAGE

- Use soap and water instead of hand sanitizer whenever possible
- Even if it’s still cold outside, use lukewarm (not hot) water to wash your hands
- Use fragrance-free hand soap
- Pat your hands dry rather than rubbing them – but dry them thoroughly
- Wear gloves when cleaning and sanitizing your home to avoid exposure to skin irritants, as well as when gardening or doing any task that exposes hands to friction



TO TREAT DRY & DAMAGED HANDS

- Moisturize regularly – ideally after every hand wash – using a fragrance-free, dermatologist-recommended hand cream. Creams absorb best when applied to damp hands, but if you’ve used hand sanitizer, you must allow it to dry fully before applying cream in order for the sanitizer to be effective.
- Invest in a hand cream instead of using a body lotion on your hands. Typically, the greasier the better when it comes to hand cream! (Trust reliable resources like the Canadian Dermatology Association, your primary care provider or a medical professional via your **virtual care platform** for recommendations.)
- Treat your hands by applying a thick layer of cream under cotton gloves, if you have them, before bed.
- If a good hand cream isn’t working and you’re experiencing inflammation, redness and painful cracks and/or blisters, start a consult on your virtual care platform. Your care provider may suggest a low-dose, over-the-counter steroid cream.

5

STEPS TO SMARTER ONLINE SHOPPING



If you weren't an online shopper before the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdowns across Canada, there's a good chance you've become one in recent weeks. The ability to order groceries and other essential items online has been a huge advantage to many Canadians, and has also reduced traffic at brick-and-mortar locations. But it's presented its own set of challenges, too, as we all respond to the pandemic in different ways: some of us stockpiled non-perishables, others overindulged in retail therapy, and many were unable to purchase what they needed.

We've all learned a lot over the past several weeks. As we continue to practice physical distancing and make purchases online, here are five ways we can shop smarter:

1) LIMIT YOUR ORDERS.

As online retailers slowly catch up with the initial onslaught of demand, it's becoming easier to schedule grocery pick-ups and deliveries, and desirable items are starting to be re-stocked. But don't be tempted to place grocery orders every three days and order items one at a time on Amazon Prime. Doing so takes availability away from those who may not be as tech savvy, those who can't afford to order items so frequently, and those who truly need the items they're shopping for. Placing several small orders also puts unnecessary strain on the environment, mail carriers, and the people risking their health to package your orders.

2) MIND YOUR QUANTITIES.

You might need paper towels, but you likely don't need six packages of them. Use the same logic here as the one around how often you put in an order: a good rule of thumb is to buy what you need for two weeks or so, so that others can also buy what they need.

3) SHOP LOCALLY.

Many of us are feeling the economic strain of this pandemic, so it is tempting to search for the lowest possible price wherever we can. But if you can afford it, try to support a local business instead of a big box store when possible. It's an incredibly difficult time to be a small business, and many have had to pivot by offering online shopping and deliveries when they haven't before. Consider placing an order with your local bakery, for instance, instead of buying bread during your next grocery shop.

4) TAKE A PAUSE.

Akin to emotional eating, it's common to turn to "retail therapy" for a quick dopamine boost when we're feeling anxious, sad or drained. Instead of clicking the "buy now" button to purchase a non-essential item, try adding it to your online shopping cart and leaving it there for a week, or keeping a list of the items you'd like to buy. By taking a pause, we often realize that we don't really need or even want the items we thought we did when we were feeling down.

5) DON'T OPEN THE DOOR TO RECEIVE DELIVERIES.

According to Health Canada, there is no known risk of coronaviruses entering Canada on parcels or packages, but we should still practice careful hygiene when opening them: dispose of packaging, disinfect all surfaces, wash hands thoroughly after handling, and refrain from touching your face.

Person-to-person contact, however, does pose a risk of transmission, so refrain from opening your door to receive deliveries. Most online retailers offer an option to leave a delivery note at checkout, where you can include detailed instructions regarding where the package should be left.





JOIN OUR FREE 10-DAY STRETCH FOR SUCCESS CHALLENGE!

For most of us, staying home during the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a more sedentary lifestyle. Pair this with stress and a sub-par workstation, and it's no wonder we're experiencing aches and pains.

Join our 10-Day Stretch for Success Challenge to receive a daily email with stretches designed by Medisys supported by TELUS Health Kinesiologists. Experience reduced pain and tension and improved mobility by committing just 15 minutes each day!

[LEARN MORE AND SIGN UP HERE.](#)

