

Which physical exercises are more appropriate to do at home during the pandemic period?

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Short communication

The guidance of most epidemiological experts to curb the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19) is to adopt strategies such as quarantine for a large part of the population.¹ Currently, this is the most appropriate measure to minimize the number of infected people as much as possible and prevent the collapse of health systems in the affected countries. However, the radical change in the lifestyle of the population, staying at home, can be a demotivating factor for people who need social interaction, adequate environment, and incentives to perform physical exercises.

Psychological factors such as stress, anger, fear, boredom, experienced more intensely in the quarantine² can also be demotivating agents for the practice of physical exercises. However, it must be remembered that regular physical exercise helps to maintain an adequate state of physical and mental health, bringing benefits mostly to the neuromusculoskeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrine, metabolic, and immunological systems.^{1,3} During this critical period, the offer of different exercise proposals on the internet is increasing³ through social media, for free or paid, so that people can access and practice at home. This is an excellent resource, especially in this period we are going through. However, it is of fundamental importance that there is an adequate prescription of the exercise, according to people's needs and possible limitations. That should be done by a qualified professional so that it is possible to estimate an exercise program to maintain or improve components of health-related physical abilities.

Regarding the choice of adequate physical exercises, it is necessary to consider the ones that are interesting, motivating, and possible to be done at home, with the necessary equipment for practice. Second, the exercise must be simple, safe, and easy to implement in the daily routine, including strengthening, stretching, balance, and control.⁴ Third, exercises that have scientifically proven benefits, mainly for the immune system and mental health should be preferred. The regular practice of moderate aerobic exercises (30 min/day) such as walking, running, jumping rope, jumping jacks, can bring benefits to the immune system³ and be adapted for practice at home. Equivalent to aerobic exercise, the Chinese martial art Tai Chi Chuan, is currently practiced as a way of cultivating life and preserving health⁵. Tai Chi has been described as meditation in movement that combines concentration and mindfulness, capable of modulating various aspects of health, such as mood, the immune, autonomic, and nervous system functions through breathing with light, smooth, low-impact movements, and is recommended for improving psychological well-being and life quality.

Besides Tai Chi Chuan, exercises such as Qigong and Yoga can also be considered for their benefits and practicality, as they do not require equipment and little space is enough for practice.⁴ One of the factors in common among these exercises is the prioritization of conscious

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breathing. In 1996, Professor Philippe Campignon,⁶ Campignon, already emphasized the importance of releasing the breath from its biomechanical barriers, commonly caused by psychosomatic factors, so that it was possible to find a rebalance among the body systems. Although breathing exercises cannot prevent Covid-19,⁷ they can promote positive neurophysiological responses for the body and mind, such as: control of pain, stress, anxiety, etc.⁸ More than ever, this period teaches us that we must consider the complexity of the human being: body, mind, and spirit. Adopting exercises that can contemplate the complexity of the human being will probably provide balance for the practitioner's health.

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Conflicts of interest

I declare that there is no conflicts of interest.

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