



# IN STRIDE

## INSIDER INSIGHT

### SSBC Alum shares her tips for staying well during COVID-19

COVID-19 has made it harder to exercise—missing the familiarity of your local YMCA, the serenity of swimming laps at the pool, or the social connection from walking or hiking with group of friends. We checked in with Donna McInnes, a Small Steps for Big Changes alumni, to see how she has been doing throughout COVID-19. She was involved in the Small Steps for Big Changes a year ago, starting in January 2020. Donna has been consistent with her goals and has been tracking her food and exercise for over a year now. She currently engages in yoga, tai chi, walking and hiking—all great activities that are feasible to do in the current pandemic environment. In connecting with Donna, she shared what has been working best for her over the past several months. Specifically, she spoke of how important it was for her to get outside as much as possible. The fresh air and sunshine provide her a boost to your mental health. “You can keep your workouts interesting such as listening to a podcast or new music while walking, you can also explore a new area in your neighborhood” she reflected. She went on to say: “You can also keep your walks interesting by adding mindfulness elements such as the smell of the air, different flowers and trees, the sun or wind as you move. If you need to increase the intensity of your walks, look for hills or do some step ups on the curb that is appropriate to your fitness levels.” Donna also spoke of how early mornings are the best time for her to get outside and exercise: “As soon as it is light enough, I am out of the door to walk.” What great tips to share with others who



are navigating the great outdoors during their exercise routines. We asked Donna what motivates her to stay active. Her response was that she loves being outdoors —“walking and hiking are my two favourite activities”. She mentioned that “everyday it is

motivational to find something new – an unexpected bird, a patch of wild violets, a feeding fish jumping in the lake, or a newly formed ice creation on the rock wall. There is always something!” Finally, in speaking with Donna, she reflected on her favorite part of the program: “I loved using the HealthWatch 360 App. It allowed me to navigate through the program to see what my food choices would mean to my daily requirements. It allows me to make alternatives choices based on what it showed me.” She continues to use this food tracking tool 1 year after finishing SSBC. Donna’s advice for those who are enrolled or are waiting for SSBC to resume: “Find activities you love. There is always something. JUST DO IT!!”

## MANAGING STRESS DURING TRYING TIMES

Winter can be a trying season with the time changes and less day light, let alone adding COVID-19 to the mix. Below you will find a handful of strategies that can help you manage stress if you do begin to feel the winter blues.

1. **Staying Connected:** Reaching out to family and friends via text, telephone, or video chat. Social isolation can make anxious times seem even more anxious; humans are social beings and staying in contact with family and friends can help relieve stress and anxiety.
2. **Structuring Your Day:** Having a proactive routine is important during the “new normal”. Some activities that can be done at home are exercising, cleaning, house renovations, and cooking healthy meals. This is a great time to learn a new skill and continue staying proactive during difficult times.
3. **Being Mindful:** Meditation is becoming increasingly more popular and has various health benefits. There is no better time than now to start meditating and becoming more mindful. Meditation can help alleviate stress and anxiety. Meditation and exercise are healthy ways of coping and can easily be established into someone’s daily routine.
4. **Having a Laugh:** They say, “laughter is medicine”; during stressful times it can be. Have a laugh and play games with family and friends or watch some stand-up comedy in the evenings.



# STAYING ACTIVE DURING COVID-19

As the temperature drops, some may find it challenging to keep up with one's workout regimes. If this is you, you're not alone. It is important to remember that staying active is just as important in the winter as any other time of the year. Many individuals find it challenging to be committed with the shorter days, colder weather, and holidays. However, having a partner, friend, or family member can help you stay motivated and accountable. There are many feasible ways to overcome these winter challenges and stay on track with your health and workout. We thought we'd share some evidence-based tips for getting active provided by our friends from the **Sport Information Resource Centre**. You can find the full infographic [here](#).

## Evidenced-based tips to get you active

1. **Set a goal:** and make sure your goals are S.M.A.R.T.  
**Specific (Simple, significant)**  
**Measurable (meaningful, motivating)**  
**Attainable (achievable, agreed)**  
**Relevant (realistic, reasonable)**  
**Time bound (time-based, time limited, timely)**
  1. **Create an Action Plan:** Having an detailed plan for when, where, and how to achieve physical activity is essential since it gives you a clear direction and keeps you focused.
  2. **Track it:** Having a physical activity log book is a great way to keep track of your journey and see the progress you have made. You can also use other forms of devices such as smartwatches or GPS devices.
  3. **Get Feedback:** Get feedback from a health or fitness professional, or friends and family. Receiving positive feedback can increase our self-confidence and help achieve your goals.
  4. **Review Your Goals:** Review your physical activity goals weekly, bi-weekly to check in with yourself and make the adjustments you need to in order to achieve your goals.



SMALL STEPS  
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## RECIPE: CHICKPEA CURRY



### Ingredients

- 1 medium serrano pepper, cut into thirds
- 4 large clove garlic
- 1 2-inch pieces of fresh ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 6 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- 2 ¼ cups no-salt-added canned diced tomatoes with juice
- ¾ tsp kosher salt
- 2 15-ounce cans chickpeas, rinsed
- 2 tsp garam masala
- Fresh cilantro for garnish

### Directions

1. Pulse serrano, garlic and ginger in a food processor until diced. Scrape down the sides and pulse again. Add onions; pulse until finely chopped, but not watery
2. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onions mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Add coriander, cumin and turmeric and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes
3. Pulse tomatoes in the food processor until finely chopped. Add to the pan along with salt. Reduce heat to maintain a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, for 4 minutes. Add chickpeas and garam masala, reduce heat to a gentle simmer, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes more. Served topped with cilantro, if desired.

You can find the full recipe [here](#).

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