

Healthy Bottom Line

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VIRUS DIARY: When you prefer it anyway, staying in isn't bad

By Courtney Bonnell

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Like you, I've been locked away at home for two months. But for me, not much has changed.

It's true that I don't go the grocery store in person like I used to. I don't grab brunch with friends, go to the gym, volunteer with a grief support group or pop in for a coffee or ice cream anymore. But overall, the pandemic hasn't disrupted my routine too dramatically.

That's because I'm an introvert who loves to stay in. My favorite thing is when friends cancel plans. I could go months (though preferably years) without talking on the phone or hopping on a Zoom call. I happily travel alone for weeks, work out by myself and watch hours of TV without going stir crazy.

Does that sound sad? Society tells us to be ashamed of staying home instead of going out with friends and family, but the slew of introvert memes and think pieces has really liberated us to lock down.

I live with my boyfriend, still see my mom and do miss weekend brunches or dinners with close friends. Uncharacteristically, I'm actually glad I've been browbeaten into some Zoom calls — including with a group of old work pals scattered across the country whom I've probably talked to more in two months than in two years.



(AP Photo/Courtney Bonnell)
In this Wednesday, May 20th photo, Courtney Bonnell puts her feet up on her coffee table as she watches television in her home in Phoenix. Bonnell is finding that lockdown life suits her introverted nature.

But besides the inordinate amount of banana bread I'm baking and walks I'm taking, not much has changed for me day to day since the coronavirus gripped our lives. I chat about the news with my boyfriend and mom, text some friends to check in every once in a

while and otherwise carry on the same routine: exercise, work, food, TV, social media, dog snuggles, bed.

Obviously, this is privilege. I don't have kids or a sick loved one to take care of, I'm able to work from home and I'm not struggling to make ends meet

in this crashing economy. I'm lucky that nothing has changed that's forced me to crack out of my shell. I'm allowed to be safely ensconced in the house I never wanted to leave to begin with.

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Hospital kiboshed sticker doodles, but the tiny artworks make a triumphant return

By Deborah Vankin
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES – The humble doodle has found itself at the center of a discussion about public art at Keck Hospital of USC.

Medical center workers, equipped with black Sharpie pens, have been drawing on ginormous, bright-green circular stickers that patients and staff have been wearing since mid-March to show that they have been screened for coronavirus symptoms and have sanitized their hands. The screening staff, which is creating the sticker art for all who pass through the hospital's doors, say it has helped alleviate stress from the health crisis.

"When the pandemic started, a lot of our staff were frightened," Annette Sy, the chief nursing officer who oversees the staff conducting screenings, said. "Even though we're sanitizing and wearing masks, we still have COVID-19 in our environment. The art, it livens things up, adds flavor and humor. It's helped people say, 'We're all in this together.'"

By early April, the halls of the hospital were filled with doctors, nurses and patients who'd come for essential procedures, many sporting hearts and smiley faces, ice cream cones and flowering trees on their shirts. Familiar characters, like SpongeBob SquarePants, were appearing on stickers, as did a phrase from USC's fight song: "Fight On." (Patients who arrived visibly ill and were suspected of having COVID-19 were screened in a tent outside and taken into isolation, so they didn't get stickers.)

Then politics happened.

Stickers began appearing with "Biden 2020" or "Trump Make America Great

(Photos by Ricardo Carrasco III/Keck Medicine of USC/TNS)
Right: At Keck Hospital of USC, staff tried to provide a little levity by doodling on stickers worn by employees and patients after they had been screened for coronavirus symptoms.



The artistic hand of Faith Robinson, an RN at Keck Medical Center of USC.



Above: Juan Aguayo, a surgical technician at Keck Medical Center of USC, taps into his artistic side.

Again" on them, which some people found offensive. The hospital put an end to the sticker art.

"We stopped it because we were reminding people we're a multicultural, scholarly community and diversity enriches all our activities and interactions," Sy said. "The artwork has to be inclusive and without religious or political beliefs."

Staff members complained, verbally and in emails, asking when the sticker art would resume. Some said it was the highlight of their day; others had been choosing entrances because they knew certain artists would be there. The daily ritual of picking out which

piece of art to wear for the day while mingling _ at a distance _ with others from different parts of the hospital had become an anticipated social event, said the director of patient and family experience, Kaitlin Alderete.

"It was something we all looked forward to. You could really engage with each other and have a more meaningful relationship," she said, recalling that on St. Patrick's Day, staff wore four-leaf clovers. "Good luck charms."

So Alderete and others came up with guidelines that she said are more in alignment "with USC's code of ethics," including being respectful of religious

and political beliefs and being mindful that the USC community is diverse.

The sticker art resumed.

The latest standout, Sy said, is a series of hearts, lungs, kidneys and livers, realistically rendered by physical therapist Yasaman Barzi. They're traced from an anatomy book and nod to the hospital's transplant surgeries.

"It's been very meditative; it's helped me balance," Barzi said of her art. "With all the stress and uncertainty we have right now, this offers a hopeful moment. It's a distraction."

Sy envisions the sticker art being around for some time.

"We're waiting for guidance from the Department of Public Health and CDC, but I feel we're gonna be wearing masks and screening for a while. And as long as we have the green stickers, the art will continue."

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Apple, Google release template for COVID-19 contact tracing apps

By Gopal Ratnam
CQ-Roll Call

Apple and Google released the first phase of a template that would allow software developers to build apps to assist public health authorities in tracking the spread of COVID-19.

Apple and Google executives told reporters that they had refined several features of the template after extensive consultations with public health authorities, privacy advocates, academics and government agencies from around the world. More refinements could be added in later phases through updates, they said.

The Bluetooth-based design would depend not only on voluntary download of the apps by users around the world but also require express consent from users to report a positive diagnosis for COVID-19 through the app. The design also would only allow those apps that have been built by or on behalf of public health authorities, the companies said.

The template, called Exposure Notification API, is being rolled out to iPhone and Android users in the form of a software update, both companies said.

Several U.S. states and as many as 22 countries across five continents have expressed interest in using the technology to conduct contact tracing, Apple and Google executives told reporters on a conference call on the condition that they not be named. The executives also declined to name the states or countries that have expressed interest in the technology.

And unlike earlier designs, the application programming interface _ the template _ would not require information to be stored in a central database but instead would allow users to see on their own smartphones if they have been exposed to someone with the illness, company executives said. The template will prohibit developers from using a device's GPS to track users' location and will not broadcast any aspect of a user's identity to anyone else, the companies said.

The information would be used only by public health authorities and neither company will collect any personal user data nor monetize them, the companies said. The Bluetooth keys will be generated randomly and metadata traveling between devices will be encrypted, the companies said.

The unique Apple-Google collaboration was launched five weeks ago to ensure that the apps on iPhones and Android devices can send and receive Bluetooth signals from each other, the executives said. The

companies engineered the design so as to ensure that Bluetooth signals can be sent and received even when a user's phone is in sleep mode, and that such signal transmission would not drain devices' batteries, the companies said.

Contact tracing is becoming a key feature of managing the spread of the pandemic as states and countries across the world reopen their economies after more than two months of shutting down almost all economic activity. The goal of contact tracing is to have public health authorities track down anyone testing positive for the disease and figure out who they may have come into contact with during the previous two weeks and alerting those people to seek medical attention and isolate themselves.



The design template would allow public health authorities to define parameters as they see fit, including specifying what constitutes exposure to an infected person, figuring out how many exposures an individual might have had, and assessing the transmission risk on a case-by-case basis.



Although the design would not permit GPS tracking of individual phones, it allows public health agencies to ask for a zipcode or other geographic information from users to understand if a new COVID-19 cluster is beginning to form, the companies said.

North and South Dakota, as well as Utah already are using GPS-based tracking apps for contact tracing.

The North Dakota app, called Care 19, which uses GPS tracking, will be supplemented with a new app labeled CARE 19 Exposure that's built on the Apple and Google template released Wednesday, the state's governor, Doug Burgum said in a statement provided by Apple and Google.

"The CARE19 Exposure app will help us improve contact tracing and continue our ND Smart Restart by notifying people who may have been exposed to COVID-19, reaching the greatest number of people in a way that protects their privacy," Burgum said in the statement. "As we respond to this unprecedented public health emergency, we invite other states to join us in leveraging smartphone technologies to strengthen existing contact tracing efforts, which are critical to getting communities and economies back up and running."

Apple and Google said that while each state may have apps that are slightly different from each other, the design template would allow devices to communicate with each other.

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J&J to stop selling talc-based baby powder in US,



(Justin Sullivan/Getty Images/TNS)

FILE - this 2019 file photo shows containers of Johnson's Baby Powder made by Johnson & Johnson sitting on a shelf. The company announced on May 19th it will no longer sell the talc-based version in the U.S. and Canada amid thousands of lawsuits and millions of dollars in damages it has paid over the years to settle allegations of asbestos contamination -- a charge the company vehemently denies.

By Linda A. Johnson
Associated Press

FAIRLESS HILLS, Pa. — Johnson & Johnson is ending sales of its iconic talc-based Johnson's Baby Powder in the U.S. and Canada, where demand has dwindled amid thousands of lawsuits claiming it has caused cancer.

The world's biggest maker of health care products said Tuesday the talc-based powder will still be sold outside the U.S. and Canada.

"Demand for talc-based Johnson's Baby Powder in North America has been declining due in large part to changes in consumer habits and fueled by misinformation around the safety of the product and a constant barrage of litigation advertising," the company said.

J&J faces about 19,400 cases alleging its talcum powder caused users to develop ovarian cancer, through use for feminine hygiene, or mesothelioma, a cancer that strikes the lungs and other organs.

Of the cases that have been tried, J&J has had 12 wins, 15 losses and seven mistrials. All of the losses have

either been overturned on appeal or are still being appealed.

The company insists, and the overwhelming majority of medical research on talc indicates, that the talc baby powder is safe and doesn't cause cancer.

"Whether or not the powder actually causes cancer, people became hesitant to use the product," Erik Gordon, a professor at University of Michigan's business school, said in an email.

J&J spokeswoman Kimberly Montagnino said the company doesn't plan to settle any of the lawsuits and "will continue to vigorously defend" the product.

The New Brunswick, New Jersey, company said the baby powder decision came as it moves to discontinue about 100 consumer health products. It said its aim is to prioritize products in high demand during the coronavirus outbreak and allow for social distancing in its manufacturing and distribution facilities.

J&J will still sell its less-popular cornstarch-based baby powder in North America.

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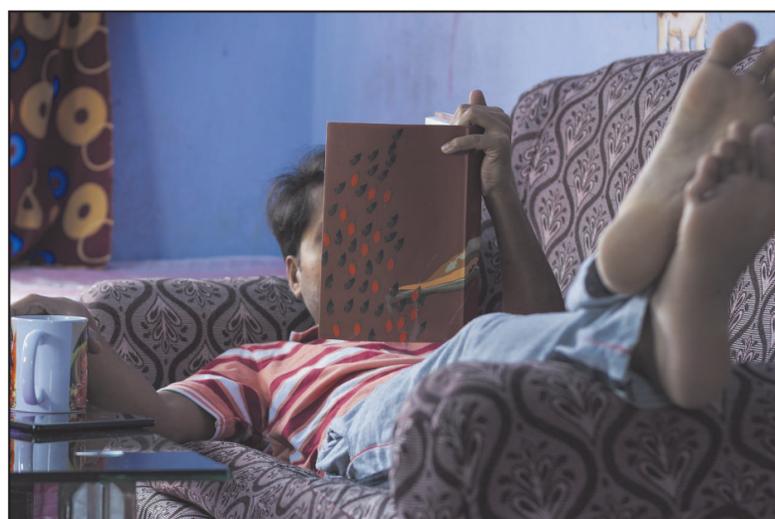
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Diary

From page 1

But because travel is my passion, not going anywhere for the foreseeable future has downsides, even for me. A few times a year, I'd get thousands of miles away from this house I'm wedded to. Now I'm truly stuck, even if just by the unsafe feeling I'd get stepping on a plane or sleeping in a hotel room right now. No new cultures, foods and landscapes to fill my soul for those long stretches at home.

As society reopens and others stream back into the world with relief, I'm glad to stay locked down.

Here in Phoenix, people are getting their nails done, going to restaurants and gathering in groups again. Not me. And not only because of the continued health risks. But because even after two months of being stuck at home, this is still where I'd rather be.

Except maybe Greece.

"Virus Diary," an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus saga through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world.

Cooking more at home? Diverse food cultures can expand heart-healthy menu

By American Heart Association News

For many in the United States, dinner means a large portion of meat and two sides, usually a starch and a vegetable. Think steak, potatoes and peas, or chicken, carrots and rice.

“That’s a very American and northern European idea – a meal which stems from a large amount of meat being available, and also wealth,” said Amy Bentley, a professor of food studies at New York University.

But trying different dishes from diverse cultures can open up a new menu of heart-healthy food options and go-to meal ideas. And now, with more people making their own meals as they stay home to limit the spread of the coronavirus, what better time to try something different for dinner than the month of May when we celebrate World Day for Cultural Diversity?

Meat is just an accent on the dish in many other parts of the world, said Bentley, author of “Inventing Baby Food: Taste, Health and the Industrialization of the American Diet.” Vegetables, including legumes like black beans or chickpeas, make up a medium portion of the plate. A starch like rice or polenta usually makes up the largest portion. Spices add flavor.

Think an Indian curry or Chinese stir-fried chicken and vegetables.

If you’re cooking the dish for the first time, Bentley recommends making a smaller amount or going light on spicier ingredients to get used to the flavors.

Keep moderation in mind when sizing up portions, too, said Ronaldo Linares, a New Jersey-based chef and restaurant consultant who teaches cooking classes. Linares, who comes from a Cuban-Colombian background, wrote the cookbook, “Sabores de Cuba,” a recipe collection of classic Cuban dishes with a healthy, diabetes-friendly twist.

Eating one big meal has the



Stock photos



potential to cause fluctuations in blood sugar, Linares said. Research shows fluctuations in blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol could put people at higher risk for heart attack or stroke.

Using fresh ingredients and avoiding processed foods can add interesting flavors, he added. “If you are sticking to the guidelines of traditional cooking, it’s going to be naturally healthy.”

Instead of store-bought salsa, Bentley suggested making homemade salsa with chopped-up tomatoes, onion, cilantro, jalapenos and a pinch of salt. If a recipe calls for butter, Linares suggested substituting avocado oil or olive oil, which are high in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats.

Both Linares and Bentley noted that for some families, a lack of access to affordable, fresh ingredients can hamper the ability to eat diverse or healthier foods. Food choices also can be influenced by the exposure to ads for sugary drinks and fast food, regardless of one’s racial or ethnic background.

Just 1 in 10 adults meet the daily recommendation of having at least 1 1/2 to 2 cups of fruit and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables as part of a healthy

eating pattern, according to a 2017 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Ultimately, we need a better food environment,” Bentley said. “It’s too much to expect the individual to be solely responsible because so much of this is about the food that’s available in the culture as well as socioeconomic issues.”

Some general nutritional guidelines can fit into meals within any cultural preference, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. They include making half your plate fruits and vegetables, and adding calcium-rich foods to each meal.

“It’s better to talk about healthy approaches to eating through actual food rather than nutrients,” Bentley said, “and not get hung up on portions and the minute mechanics that only adds to people’s stress.”

The American Heart Association suggests a healthy dietary pattern

to reduce heart disease risk factors, such as obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. Plant-based and Mediterranean diets are singled out in AHA dietary guidelines.

Linares picked Peruvian cuisine when asked to highlight another food culture for people looking to try heart-healthy but flavorful alternatives. His sample meal starts with ceviche, a seafood dish.

“So, let’s say a ceviche of cooked octopus. It’s super tender, they char it, serve it cold, toss it in some lime juice and some herbs,” he said. “Then you have a sweet potato puree and add some aromatics and seasoning. Add some corn, some pickled onions and you put it together in this beautiful bowl.”

“It can’t get simpler than that,” Linares added, “but the flavors are ridiculous.”

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