



SIX TECH WELLNESS TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2021



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It's an exciting time to be in the worlds of hospitality, spa, and wellness. Technology has been changing and enhancing the way we perceive and interact with our bodies and minds in ways previous generations would never have thought possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, of course, changed some of this trajectory. 2020 was an unpredictable year, and we're coming out of it seeing big interest in tech wellness, elevated generations of existing technologies, and wider spread adoption.

ISPA Chairman Patrick Huey noted in a recent [Book4Time webinar](#) that the spa and wellness industries have traditionally been somewhat reticent to embrace some areas of technology, and said that COVID has driven change in that area. Asked later by [Spa Executive](#) what role technology will play in the future of these sectors, he said:

"Technology will be our friend. We are all learning how

to work in social media channels and build content that can exist virtually. Options like online booking, emailable receipts, touchless payment options, QR Coded menus (a great way to reduce paper usage and costs for printing) are all here to stay. And the great thing about these technological enhancements is that they allow us to keep our focus squarely on the guests and what they experience when they come into our spas, because that experience is the heart of the matter."

Spa Executive has touched on some of those technologies in this list of tech wellness trends we'll be watching in 2021. Others include testing tech, at-home fitness and wellness and autonomous cleaning tech. Technology is improving people's health and wellbeing, helping users to stay engaged with others while keeping our distance, and helping wellness and hospitality companies improve operations and increase revenue.

Here are six tech wellness trends to watch in 2021.

TESTING & TRACKING TECH



The democratization of medical testing has completely changed the way we check ourselves for everything – tests that were once available only in a medical setting can now be done from home and then either sent out for analysis or even analyzed by ourselves at home. Applications and implications are dizzying.

One application for this technology, personalized nutrition, was listed a couple of years ago in the [GWI's 2019 Global Wellness Trends Report](#). The report states, "Traditionally, genetic testing, blood analysis and other testing for the purpose of personalized diet/nutrition advice were reserved for specific medical, cultural, dietary or allergy issues. Today, sophisticated personalized nutrition recommendations based on affordable, self-administered tests are accessible at relatively low costs (and will only keep getting more affordable)."

And there is much more. COVID [has added to this](#) by taking visits virtual and increasing demand for home testing options. Among the companies bringing these tests to market are [Everlywell](#), which specializes in home healthcare tests supported by a digital platform that provides results and helps customers understand the diagnostics and next steps. Among the company's offerings are tests for thyroid hormone levels, food and allergen sensitivity, women's health and fertility, vitamin D deficiency and inflammation, STIs, and COVID-19.

Another personal health testing and insights company is [LetsGetChecked](#), which offers similar at-home testing kits for COVID, STDs, vitamin deficiencies, hormone levels, and more.

According to [Tech Crunch](#), US consumers are waking up to the fact that virtual care and at-home options are available and effective. Everlywell CEO and founder Julia Cheek is quoted as saying, "What you have is this lightbulb moment for Americans in a new way that care can be delivered where then they definitely don't want to go back. It's not just for Everlywell. This is all of these verticals, that have really shifted consumer behavior around healthcare in the home, and I think that will be somewhat permanent."

Combined with the granular tracking abilities of the current generation of wearables, the amount of available information at our fingertips is astonishing. The Apple Watch Series 6 measures blood oxygen levels and shallow breathing, which can then be used to detect anxiety or panic attacks (according to [Mind Body Green](#) and [Well + Good](#)), Fitbit Sense tracks skin temperature and moisture changes, Nutrisense features a continuous glucose monitor, and the new Amazon Halo determines body composition and even measures energy levels based on your tone of voice.

HOME FITNESS TECH



A lot of people were already working out at home before COVID, but with gyms and health clubs shuttered, home fitness really took off in 2020. [One survey](#) found that 64% of respondents have become more interested in at-home fitness options than they were before quarantine and more than half said they don't plan on renewing gym memberships. Seventy per cent said that fitness has become a bigger priority for them since the pandemic, one quarter had purchased an exercise bike, and 21% had purchased a treadmill or elliptical machine. Seventy-four per cent reported using at least one fitness app while in lockdown.

[The clear winner was Peloton](#), which was already doing well pre-pandemic. In May 2020, the stationary bike's stock went up by 36%, and by November, the company was reporting a 232% increase in sales.

Beyond Peloton, there are too many examples to list. The current generation of equipment is sophisticated and connected, and can log performance, stream on-demand workouts, bring personal trainers into your space, and mimic outdoor experiences from around the world.

Examples include [Vitruvian's V-Form Trainer](#), which works with an app that offers training sessions, customizable workout plans, performance insights, and competitions. And, [according to Well + Good](#), spin bikes and treadmills from Nordic Track and ProForm "come with an iFit integration that allows users to run through different trails on seven continents and 50 countries using a built-in video screen and the resistance auto-adjusts based on the terrain ... you get to feel like you're trekking in Machu Picchu or on Mount Kilimanjaro." iFit also has a series of guided walking meditations with audiovisual elements, like waves lapping on the beach or a breeze blowing through tall grass, while [Zwift's](#) immersive fitness video programming allows users to meet, train, and race with other runners and cyclists on terrain around the world.

When positive news about a Pfizer vaccine came out in late November, Peloton's stock did drop 20% (says [Forbes](#)), but all signs point to a continuation of the at-home fitness trend.

NUTRITION & FOOD TECH



Personalized nutrition has been around for some time - the [GWI](#) tagged it as a trend to watch in 2019 -- but the COVID-19 pandemic has boosted interest in this area due to nutrition's relationship to immunity and mental health (and Innova Market Insights recently listed it was a [top trend for 2021](#)). Technologies that measure key biomarkers, collect big data, and develop personalized nutrition programs all fall into this category.

[Viome](#), for example, is a systems biology company aiming to help individuals improve their health through personalized nutrition recommendations. The start-up [recently launched](#) a "world-first" Health Intelligence service that makes food and supplement recommendations based on a person's "biological code." [Persona](#) offers a similar model that claims to deliver "the right vitamins, at the right dose" right to your door based on a personalized assessment.

Interest in tech to facilitate personalized nutrition will continue to grow, while food tech continues to dazzle. The evolution of science and production technology in this area has facilitated the development of a variety of previously unheard of foodstuffs, including [meal replacements](#) offering quick, healthy alternatives derived from an array of nutrient sources.

The last few years have also seen a dizzying pace of development in alternative and cell-based meat alternatives from companies like Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods. These alternatives are commonly plant-based, made with soy, wheat, or pea protein, while [HaoFood](#) is a new player that creates meat alternatives from peanut protein.

Among the more unusual developments is a protein called "Fy," which is created by fermenting volcanic microbes sourced from hot springs at Yellowstone Park. Start-up, Nature's Fynd is [reportedly](#) using Fy as the base for hot dogs, nuggets, hamburgers, and other animal-free foods. Cell-based meat, on the other hand, is genuine animal meat grown from cells taken from an animal and grown outside of it. In December, 2020, Singapore became the first country to allow the sale of lab-grown chicken meat from U.S. start-up Eat Just. [Reuters](#) reported that this is the world's first regulatory approval for "so-called clean meat that does not come from slaughtered animals."

Expect this pursuit of alternative proteins to continue into 2021 and beyond.

SLEEP TECH



The ever-elusive good night's sleep is more elusive than ever. In the years leading up to the pandemic, reports abounded that people were not getting enough sleep, and the current situation has not improved matters.

[One study](#) found that Google searches for “insomnia” were up 58% during April and May of 2020 and [another](#) found that there was a 37% increase in rates of clinical insomnia during the pandemic. This pursuit of decent rest has led to a boom in sleep technology. In China alone, this market is [reportedly](#) worth nearly US\$60 billion a year, and is on a growth trajectory that saw more than 1,000 sleep-tech businesses open in 2018 and 2019.

The tech includes wearables combined with apps that monitor your breathing, heart rate, sleep duration, sleep depth, and waking periods to provide data and insights about your sleeping patterns. And gadgets to help you fall and stay asleep are plentiful. Examples include musical sleep lamps that connect to your phone and play music, white noise, or soothing sounds; Noise canceling

sleep earbuds, designed for comfort while sleeping, that employ white noise or other sleepy sounds; and The Muse S, [a meditation headband](#) that offers a range of calming audio exercises and sounds, tracks brain activity, and serves as a sleep tracker. More examples:

Smart Beds, like the [Climate360 by Sleep Number](#), which uses advanced temperature technology to create a personalised and responsive microclimate combined with automatic firmness adjustability for optimal sleep.

The Withings ScanWatch. “Developed by cardiologists and sleep experts,” the watch is a clinically validated hybrid smartwatch that detects risk of arrhythmia (AFib) and sleep apnea.

The Embr Wave Bracelet, [a smart bracelet](#) uses the body's thermoreceptors to change how warm or cool the user feels through changing the temperature on their wrist, which can result in a better night's sleep.

CLEANING & SANITATION TECH



One of the most significant changes the spa and wellness industry has made in the last year is bringing cleaning and sanitation out into the open rather than keeping it out of guest view. While most the hospitality industry has always practised strict cleaning protocols, this cleaning was traditionally done behind closed doors. The pandemic has prompted a switch to doing it in front of guests, so they can see that the cleaning is being done and can feel reassured.

Technology is also playing a role in these enhanced cleaning and sanitation requirements.

[ARVE](#), a Swiss start-up, has introduced a data-based system offering verification of proper execution of cleaning protocols. This allows hotels to track cleaning performance of their teams and provides guests with proof that hygiene protocols are being followed. ARVE, according to [HospitalityNet](#), is the first service to fulfill this need using data-driven intelligence.

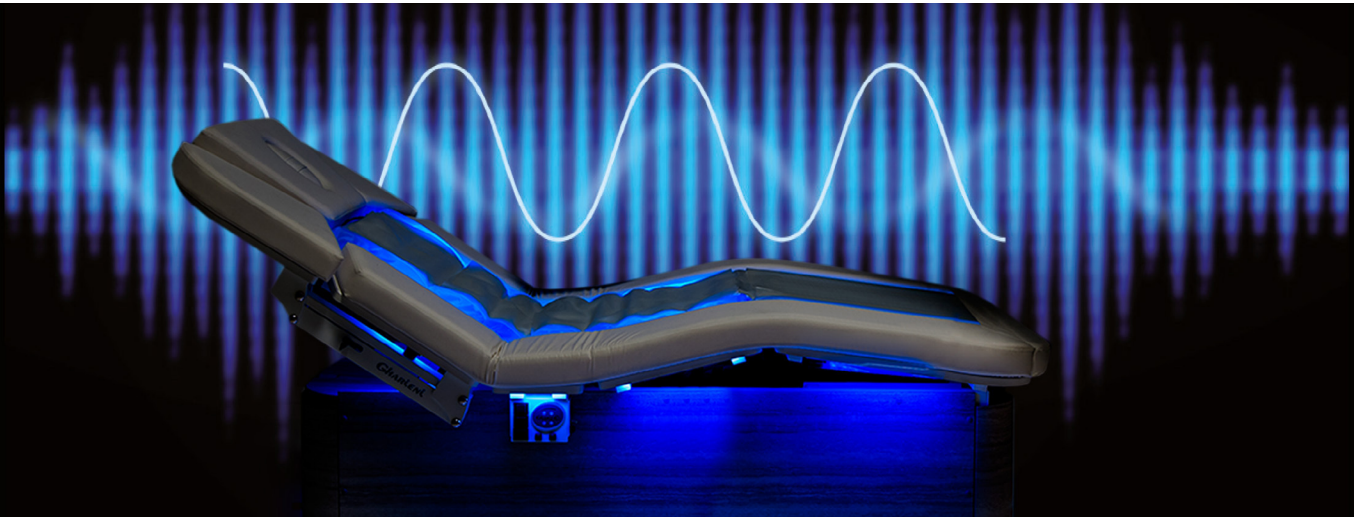
And the use of robots is on the rise. Cleaning robots are not new and have been used for some time now in hospitals, hotels, and homes – like the iRobot Roomba vacuuming robot. Now [Nasdaq](#) reports that usage of cleaning robots has dramatically increased since the coronavirus outbreak, and predicts that these robots will stay in trend even as the world returns to normal. Among the types of robots used are vacuuming robots, disinfectant spraying robots, and UV light robots.

One major player, as use of these bots expands from hospitals to hospitality, is the [COMVAT DUO₃](#), a high energy hospital grade UV-C for no-touch environmental disinfection. The [COMVAT DUO₃](#) uses UVC light and ozone, either independently or sequentially, to clean fungi, bacteria, and viruses from air and surfaces. According to the website, “The added performance of Ozone Disinfection improves the integrity of the disinfection process in heavily shadowed areas and any areas of low exposure to pulsed xenon or continuous wave UVC. The combination of these two reference technologies is what elevates the performance of the [COMVAT DUO₃](#) supporting a global disinfection process, overcoming the limitations of other technologies.”

[APN News](#) quotes IEEE member, Jayakrishnan Thrivikraman Nair, as saying, “robotization makes [cleanliness and hygiene] more manageable through accurate scheduling, improved efficiency, accessory footprint, dynamic cleaning patterns, 24x7 assured cleanliness and much more.”

Nair also said, “The latest trend in autonomous cleaning is not just based on independent cleaning robots. Rather, these robots can be a part of the connected and intelligent cleaning system with well-defined behavior, with an ability to adapt to the changing environment and dynamics of the area under cleaning.”

TOUCHLESS TECH



Contactless and touchless experiences in spa, wellness, and hospitality are in demand as we deal with the coronavirus situation, and will likely remain so even once a vaccine is distributed. People will continue to want options that don't require non-essential face-to-face interaction as we readjust to life in the shadow of a global pandemic and with the possibility of history repeating itself. Things, it has been said, may never return to the previous normal, and a new contingent of the population will want to remain in some level of isolation for the foreseeable future and maybe even beyond.

This means a growth in demand for touchless check in, checkout, and payment options, remote wellness experiences, virtual classes, immersive virtual reality, and in-room hotel and resort wellness programs.

Booking and business management software will play a big role in wellness and hospitality, from remote booking options to contactless check in, to touchless experiences and touchless payments. At hotels and resorts, in-room experiences will allow guests to take advantage of wellness offerings without unnecessary human interaction. For example, Accor [has partnered](#) with wellness tech company Three Sages to create in-room wellness programming through which guests are offered complimentary yoga, stretching, breath-work, mindfulness, and sleep practices on in-room entertainment systems. Video programming connects users to nature using spectacular outdoor backdrops from beautiful locations.

[Travel Weekly](#) quoted the Global Wellness Institute's Beth McGroarty as stating that wellness venues have adapted by focusing on treatments that can happen "either without practitioners or with very little intermediation." These technology-enhanced offerings include float tanks, infrared saunas, cryotherapy machines, and massage devices.

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has created a menu of contactless treatments that incorporate Hyperice's Hypervolt percussion massage device, NormaTec Pulse Pro 2.0 Leg Recovery compression system, and Venom heat vibration wrap.

McGroarty also said. "These are technologies that had already become sort of mainstream in wellness centers and spas, because the No. 1 pain point for this industry has been the labor costs. Now this has definitely accelerated due to Covid-19, and we're seeing more offerings that have a high impact but don't have a high human labor component."

Spa and wellness brands are also increasing their digital presence with both complimentary and subscription-based online programming. Como Hotels and Resorts' [Como Shambhala By My Side](#) is a digital platform that offers wellness programs and personal consultations, including pre-recorded and scheduled live yoga, Pilates and mindfulness classes, with a monthly subscription.

More examples of touchless tech include [Gharieni's Spawave system](#). Developed to treat post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) in American veterans. The technology can be used for "a therapist-free treatment experience," using computer-controlled acoustic and vibrational therapy. And The Biohacking Orb, which, according to [apswc.org](#), is "a customizable, sacred geometric chamber for enhancing physical and mental performance and improving overall well-being" using "high-tech, evidence-based wellness modalities."

Spa and wellness will remain high-touch areas, as this is an integral part of their appeal. Touchless options, however, will increase the appeal for those less interested in high touch.

NINE SPA AND WELLNESS TRENDS FOR 2021: A HOSPITALITY REPORT

It's time to look into our crystal balls and predict the future for the year ahead. Here are the trends we'll be watching in our special report: Nine spa and wellness trends for 2021.



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