

STRESS

Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response.

The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses.

It is a normal part of life. Events, which happen around us and things that we do our selves, put stress on body.

Life and stress go hand in hand. Stress is part of the package.

Stress is experienced when there is awareness of an imbalance between the rigors of what is in demand and the ability to perform.

As a life force, stress is viewed as an overwhelmingly negative force - one that can impact our physical well-being almost as acutely as our mental health.

HOW DOES STRESS AFFECT HEALTH?

- The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it.
- Stress can be positive, keeping us alert and ready to avoid danger.
- Stress becomes negative when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation between challenges.
- As a result, the person becomes overworked and stress-related tension builds.
- Stress that continues without relief can lead to a condition called distress -- a negative stress reaction.
- Distress can lead to physical symptoms including headaches, upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, and problems sleeping.
- Stress can bring on or worsen certain symptoms or diseases.
- Stress also becomes harmful when people use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs to try and relieve their stress. Unfortunately, instead of relieving the stress and returning the body to a relaxed state, these substances tend to keep the body in a stressed state and cause more problems.

We all have STRESS, and how we handle it can make all the difference.

Stress management can be a powerful tool for wellness, since too much stress can affect physical health.

There are many strategies, and one of them is all about what you eat.

Foods can help tame stress in several ways.

Comfort foods, like a bowl of warm oatmeal, boost levels of serotonin, a brain calming chemical. Other foods can cut levels of cortisol and adrenaline, stress hormones that take a toll on the body over time.

Also a healthy diet can counter the impact of stress, by shoring up the immune system and lowering blood pressure.

STRESS BUSTER FOODS:

Complex Carbs:

- All carbs prompt the brain to make more serotonin.
- For a steady supply of this feel-good chemical, it's best to eat complex carbs, which are digested more slowly.
- Good choices include whole-grains, breads, and pastas, as well as old-fashioned oatmeal.
- Complex carbs can also help you feel balanced by stabilizing blood sugar levels.

Vitamin C:

- Oranges make the list for their wealth of vitamin C.
- Vitamin C can curb levels of stress hormones while strengthening the immune system.
- In one study of people with high blood pressure, blood pressure and cortisol levels (a stress hormone) returned to normal more quickly when people took vitamin C before a stressful task.

Spinach:

- Too little magnesium may trigger headaches and fatigue, compounding the effects of stress.
- One cup of spinach goes a long way toward replenishing magnesium stores.
- Not a spinach eater? Try some cooked soybeans or a filet of salmon, also high in magnesium.
- Green leafy vegetables are a rich source of magnesium.

Fatty Fish:

- Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish such as salmon and tuna, can prevent surges in stress hormones and may help protect against heart disease, mood disorders like depression, and PMS.
- For a steady supply of feel-good omega-3s, aim to eat 3 ounces of fatty fish at least twice a week.
- In case you are vegetarian opt for flax seeds.

Nuts:

- Pistachios, as well as other nuts and seeds, are good sources of healthy fats.
- Eating a handful of pistachios, walnuts, or almonds every day may help lower your cholesterol.
- Ease inflammation in your heart's arteries.
- Make diabetes less likely.
- Help protect you against the effects of stress.
- Don't overdo it, though: Nuts are rich in calories.

Raw Veggies:

- Crunchy raw vegetables can help ease stress in a purely mechanical way.
- Munching celery or carrot sticks helps release a clenched jaw and that can ward off tension.

De-Stress with Exercise besides changing your diet, one of the best stress-busting strategies is to start exercising. Exercise boosts oxygen circulation and spurs your body to make feel-good chemicals called endorphins. Aim for 30 minutes of exercise three to four times a week.

Managing And Resolving Conflict requires the ability to quickly reduce stress and bring your emotions into balance. You can ensure that the process is as positive as possible by following guidelines:

- Listen for what is felt as well as said. When you listen you connect more deeply to your own needs and emotions, and to those of other people.
- Listening also strengthens us, informs us, and makes it easier for others to hear us when it's our turn to speak.
- Make conflict resolution the priority rather than winning or "being right."
- Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than "winning" the argument, should always be your first priority.
- Be respectful of the other person and his or her viewpoint.
- Focus on the present. If you're holding on to grudges based on past resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired.
- Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.
- Pick your battles. Conflicts can be draining, so it's important to consider whether the issue is really worthy of your time and energy.
- Be willing to forgive. Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive.

- Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish. Know when to let something go.
- If you can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree.
- It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.
- It is important to recognize, however, that if stress is a major part of your life it is a major affliction in its own right and requires primary treatment. The physical consequences of unattended stress can be far reaching and, at some point, become more permanent than chronic.
- Make sure you get plenty of sleep, eat a balanced diet, and avoid tobacco use and excess caffeine and alcohol intake.

Lot of things can cause stress. One may feel stress while going on a job interview, taking a test, or run a race. These kinds of short-term stress are normal.

Long-term (chronic) stress is caused by stressful situations or events that last over a long period of time, like problems at work or conflicts in family. Over the time, chronic stress can lead to severe health problems.

Personal problems that can cause stress include:

- Health, especially if one has a chronic illness such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis
- Emotional problems, such as anger, depression, grief, guilt, or low self-esteem.
- Relationship problems or feeling a lack of friendships or support in life.
- Major life changes, such as dealing with the death of a parent or spouse, losing your job, getting married, or moving to a new city.
- Stress in family, such as having a teenage child, or other family member who is under stress, or being a caregiver to a family member who is elderly or who has health problems.
- Conflicts with beliefs and values. For example, one may value family life, but may not be able to spend as much time with family.

Social and Job issues that can cause stress include:

- Surroundings - Living in an area where overcrowding, crime, pollution, or noise is a problem can create chronic stress.
- Social situation - Being poor, feeling lonely, or facing discrimination based on race, gender, age can add stress to life.
- Job - Being unhappy with work or finding job too demanding can lead to chronic stress. Unemployment. Losing job or not being able to find work can also add to stress level.

EXPLORE STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES:

- **Massage** is almost a form of enforced physical relaxation. Physical relaxation in turn almost always leads to mental relaxation and therefore, to stress reduction.
- **Yoga** is a popular physical discipline that not only is an effective method of toning your body physically, but requires a certain mental discipline and focus that effectively simplifies life, even if only for short period. A yoga session several days a week can be helpful.
- **Meditation** is another form of bringing the mind to focus on one's essential being which will, as with yoga, make life simpler. It's the change in perspective that creates the reduction in stress. It is also a lifestyle choice that needs repetition in order to be most effective.
- **Exercise** can be a great stress reducer, Engaged in physical activity sufficiently strident so as to result in the release of endorphins. It will change one's outlook, and the day, will seem far less tense.
- **Breathing** is a commonly used relaxation technique, and it's the main focus of meditation and mindfulness. And, since one already knows how to breathe, it's an easy and efficient way to manage stress.
- **Assertiveness** is the ability to express one's feelings and assert one's rights while respecting the feelings and rights of others. Assertive communication is appropriately direct, open and honest, and clarifies one's needs to the other person. Assertiveness comes naturally to some, but is a skill that can be learned. People who have mastered the skill of assertiveness are able to greatly reduce the level of interpersonal conflict in their lives, thereby reducing a major source of stress.

Sometimes people confuse aggressiveness with assertiveness, as both types of behaviour involve standing up for one's rights and expressing one's needs. The key difference between the two is that assertive individuals express themselves while respecting the other person. They assume the best about people, respect themselves, and think "win-win" and try to compromise. In contrast, individuals behaving aggressively will tend to employ tactics that are disrespectful, manipulative, demeaning, or abusive. They make negative assumptions about the motives of others and think in retaliatory terms, or they don't think of the other person's point of view at all. They win at the expense of others, and create unnecessary conflict. Having stronger, more supportive relationships virtually guarantees that, in a bind, they have people they can count on, which also helps with stress management, and even leads to a healthier body.