

The Stress Factor



Preventing the Harmful Effects of Stress



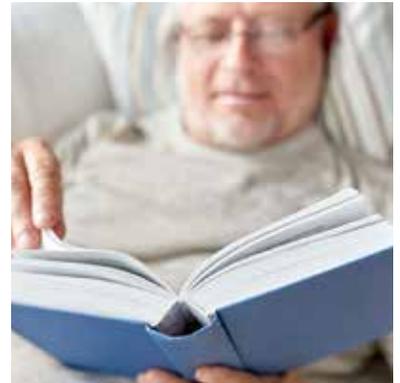
Feeling anxious, overwhelmed or overworked? You are likely stressed. Many people feel stress due to things they can't control, including issues at work, an overbooked schedule, relationship problems, dealing with a chronic illness, or caring for an elderly or sick family member.

A little bit of stress is a normal part of life, however, when stress becomes too much, it not only affects your mental health, it can also have a profound impact on your body. Long-term stress can result in a variety of illnesses, including headache, digestive problems and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

While you may not be able to eliminate all stress from your life, you can be prepared to deal with whatever life throws your way. Learning to recognize the signs of stress, including your personal triggers for stress, and how to manage it will contribute to your overall health and well-being.

TRY THESE TIPS TO MANAGE DAILY STRESS:

- **Avoid using alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism.** Many people turn to alcohol or drugs to forget about their stress, however, this can lead to even more health problems and the stress is still there when the effects wear off.
- **Exercise** (aim for 30 minutes each day). Exercise releases powerful endorphins that help fight anxiety and depression caused by stress.
- **Eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.** A well-balanced diet ensures that your body is in top shape to fight off the negative effects of stress.
- **Ask for help.** Caring for a chronically ill or elderly loved one can become overwhelming. Consider joining a support group to talk with others who have experienced the same situation. Schedule time for yourself to rejuvenate by coordinating paid respite care or asking family to step in and help.
- **Learn to meditate.** Focus your mind on what makes you feel calm and in control. Try yoga, which is an excellent way to combine meditation with exercise.
- **Connect with others.** Spending time with friends and family, as well as sharing your worries with others, can help reduce stress.
- **Practice self-care.** Relax with a favorite book, watch a movie, work a puzzle, take a walk, or have a cup of tea. Find time to do something you love and disconnect from the stress, even if just for a little while.



No matter what,
don't ignore signs of stress.



TREATING CHRONIC STRESS

If your stress isn't responding to your efforts to reduce it, you may need to talk to your doctor about additional treatment options. Your doctor can prescribe medication for anxiety or depression related to stress, as well as offer treatment of any physical side effects caused by stress. This includes treatment for headache, stomach problems, high blood pressure and other illnesses or diseases affected by stress.

No matter what, don't ignore signs of stress. Be aware of your personal stress levels and take action to address the stress. With management and treatment, you can avoid the negative health effects of chronic stress.

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