



Managing *STRESS*

Stress can affect your body, your thoughts & feelings, & your behavior. Unchecked stress can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity & diabetes.

Stress is a normal reaction of the body to any difficult situation. But the worry, fear, anger or frustration of chronic stress can damage your health & complicate other medical issues.

Recognizing common stress symptoms can help you manage them. Just a few of the impacts of stress on your body are: headaches, muscle tension, high blood pressure, sleep problems, digestive issues, change in sex drive, obesity, diabetes, circulatory & heart problems.

Impacts on behavior include the overuse of tobacco, alcohol, drugs & illegal substances.

And the impacts on your mood, such as social withdrawal, feeling overwhelmed, anxiety, panic attacks, agitation, irritability, anger, sadness & depression, can derail your life. People may need help to deal with these issues; it's smart to get help if you need it.

Tips to help you get your stress under control:

- ◇ Find active ways to manage your stress, rather than inactive activities like TV, internet, & video games
- ◇ Practice relaxation techniques such deep breathing & meditation
- ◇ Get regular physical activity, including stretching & aerobic exercise—try something new like yoga or tai chi—or dancing
- ◇ Get enough good quality, restful sleep—go to bed & get up at the same time each day
- ◇ Eat a healthy & balanced diet
- ◇ Avoid excess caffeine
- ◇ Make time for old hobbies or try out new interests
- ◇ Read, listen to music—or make music
- ◇ Spend time with family & friends you enjoy



KEEP IN MIND...

- ⇒ **Day-to-day stress is normal—chronic stress can have a negative impact on your physical, mental & emotional well-being**
- ⇒ **If your symptoms continue even after you've taken steps to control them, see your primary care provider**

Stress Reduction Checklist

- Set aside some time for yourself, 10 to 30 minutes each day
- Get regular exercise—find something you like that you can work into your schedule
- Take care of your health: eat right & get enough sleep
- Try to identify your stress triggers—this will shift your perspective & help you identify practical steps to improve each situation
- Laugh—look for humor in your everyday life, or watch a funny program or video
- Listen to music—choose tunes that relax or revive you
- Seek out social support—talk with a friend, good neighbor or supportive family
- Focus on the positive—choose to look for the good in others & yourself
- Learn progressive muscle relaxation—or indulge yourself by scheduling a massage
- Learn to manage your time more effectively
- Get organized—disorder can make things confusing & hard to remember
- Plan regular fun activities into your life
- Identify tasks that you can share or delegate, then ask for help
- Set priorities, focus on what's important & let the other stuff go
- Find your pause button—set limits & learn to say no (gracefully) to accepting more obligations
- Be assertive instead of aggressive—state your feelings, opinions or beliefs instead of becoming passive, defensive or angry
- Set short-term goals you can reach & reward yourself for meeting them
- Remember, things don't have to be perfect—sometimes “good enough” is just fine
- Let go of worrying about things, people & events you have no control over—worrying won't change anything but it will stress you out
- Don't rely on alcohol, drugs or compulsive behaviors such as gambling to reduce stress
- Talk with your primary care provider about seeing a behavioral health specialist for additional help with your emotions or mood

Courtesy of WebMD & Johns Hopkins Medicine

Mind Full, or Mindful?

