1. What Is Stress?

Stress is the way you react to any change (good, bad, real, or even imagined). These are ways the body responds to stress:

- Pupils dilate (get wider).
- Breathing speeds up.
- Heart rate speeds up.
- Blood pressure rises.
- Oxygen increases in the blood.
- Blood moves to major muscles.
- Muscles tense.
- Sweating occurs.
- Blood sugar increases.
- Abstract thinking goes down.

Stress can make you more productive. It can also help you respond to threats to your safety, such as being near a fire. Stress can make you more productive. It can also help you respond to threats to your safety, such as being near a fire. Stress makes you more productive. It can also help you respond to threats to your safety, such as being near a fire.

2. Good Health Habits

- Eat healthy.
  - Follow a balanced diet. Your weight affects your health. Find out what to eat for good health from your doctor or health care provider.
  - Eat at regular times. Don’t skip meals. If you snack, choose healthy foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grain cereals, etc.
  - Avoid “junk foods” – ones high in fat and sugar.
  - Limit caffeine. It can cause anxiety.
  - If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. This is up to 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women and persons age 65 and older. One drink is: 12 oz of regular beer; 4 to 5 oz of wine; or 1 ½ oz of 80-proof whiskey.
  - Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water each day.
- It is best to check with your doctor about taking vitamins, minerals, etc. This is especially true for those labeled “stress formulas.” In general, choose a multivitamin and mineral that gives about 100% Daily Values (%DV). High doses of some nutrients, such as vitamin B6 can be harmful.
- Get enough sleep and rest.
- Do regular exercise. This is good for both physical and mental health.
- Balance work and play. Plan some time for hobbies and recreation. These relax your mind and are a good break from life’s worries.
- A lowering of the body’s immune system.

In fact, the American Academy of Family Physicians states that about two-thirds of all visits to the family doctor are stress-related.

3. Prevent Burnout

- Set career and personal goals that can be achieved. Attempt to do well, but don’t try to be perfect.
- Follow good health habits. (See topic 2.)
- Try not to spread yourself too thin. Delegate tasks at work and at home to lessen your load. Learn to say, “No.”
- Prioritize what you need to get done in a day, a week, etc.
- Reduce long work or study hours, if you can. The more you do and the less you rest, the more likely you are to burn out.
- If you feel overwhelmed with your workload, discuss this with your boss.
- Discuss feelings and problems you are having with your family, friends, and coworkers. Talking helps to ease feelings of frustration that feed burnout. If things don’t get better, get help.
- Take regular 5 to 10 minute relaxation breaks. Take mental breaks from stressful situations, too. Learn to meditate and to practice relaxation techniques. (See "Relaxation Exercises," topic 5.)
- Make time for leisure activities you enjoy. Do these daily or at least every week.
- Plan one or more vacations during the year.
- Don’t work on your vacation.

You can get burnout from work or anything that takes more energy than you can give. Burnout is not a one-time event. It builds over time. The saying, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” applies to burnout. Use these tips to help prevent burnout.

4. Breathing Exercises

Relaxation exercises promote relaxation in 4 ways:

- They tense and relax muscles.
- They increase the amount of oxygen, which allows the heart to slow down. This helps calm you.
- They allow more oxygen to be absorbed. This assists the body’s response to stress. It also helps the body recover from stress.
- They help you relax. You will feel at peace and can plan your response to a stressful situation.

Deep Natural Breathing

Follow these steps:

1. Sit in a chair, arms at your sides, legs uncrossed.
2. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
3. Take an easy breath and deeply through your nose. Allow your abdomen to expand and push up your hand. After your abdomen is full of air, allow your chest to expand pushing up your other hand. This is one long, steady breath.
4. Hold the air in for 3 seconds.
5. Purse your lips and exhale through your mouth. Make a relaxing, whooshing sound.

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3. They increase the amount of oxygen, which allows the heart to slow down. This helps calm you.
4. They give you the chance to pause and plan your response to a stressful situation.

Breathe in through your nose and let your abdomen rise. Breathe out through your mouth, making a whooshing sound. Repeat 10 times.

5. Relaxation Exercises

Relaxation Response

Follow these steps:

1. Choose a quiet place that is free of distraction. Turn off the telephone. Ask for privacy.
2. Sit in a comfortable position so that there is no extra musculoskeletal tension. Your chin may drop a bit as you choose to relax. Your feet should touch the floor. Do not lie down. You may fall asleep.
3. Close your eyes gently. Don’t squeeze them closed.
4. Expect to feel very relaxed.
5. Repeat a word like “one” or any other one-syllable word. Say it silently over and over for 15 minutes. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Repeat the word quickly or slowly. Do whatever comes naturally.

Keep taking long, slow, deep inhalations through your nose and let out long, slow exhalations through your mouth.

Focus on the sound and feeling of deep breathing. Continue for 3 to 5 minutes.

Purifying Sighing

Follow these steps:

1. Keep your shoulders erect.
2. Let out a big sigh, making a sound of relief as the air leaves your mouth.
3. Continue to sigh 10 to 15 times, one after the other. Note: If you are prone to hyperventilating, do not do this breathing exercise.

Deep Natural Breathing

Follow these steps:

1. Sit in a chair, arms at your sides, legs uncrossed.
2. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
3. Take an easy breath and deeply through your nose. Allow your abdomen to expand and push up your hand. After your abdomen is full of air, allow your chest to expand pushing up your other hand. This is one long, steady breath.
4. Hold the air in for 3 seconds.
5. Purse your lips and exhale through your mouth. Make a relaxing, whooshing sound.
4. Shout “Stop!” If others are in earshot, imagine a stop sign, a flashing red light, or the word “Stop” in bold letters.

5. If the thought returns, repeat steps 3 to 5.

6. Go back to your normal activity. You should feel better.

Other Tips to Manage Stress

1. Count to ten when you are upset you want to scream. It helps you see that you can think about what’s bothering you. This helps to calm you down.

2. Once a pet. Sit down and imagine that you are a pet. For example, a dog or cat, and let your pet know what’s going on. It helps to calm you down.

3. Reward yourself. Treat yourself with things that you find pleasant. Good food and exercise, for example, can help you to relax.

4. Take a shower or bathe with warm water. This will soothe and calm your nerves and muscles.

5. Listen to soothing music in a quiet, calm place. Focus on the calmness of the music. When the music ends, you should feel more relaxed.

6. Reward yourself with things that you find good. Ask for a present or a treat from a friend. Give yourself a “me” time.

7. Help others. This takes the focus off of you and puts it on the needs of others.

8. Have a good cry. Tears can help to release the body of substances that form under stress. Tears also release a natural pain-relieving substance from the brain.

Remember, you’re not alone. Whatever you’re going through, others have experienced and survived. You will, too.

8. Reasons to Call Your Doctor

For any of the problems listed below, call your doctor or health care provider. You will get advice on what to do.

- You have a part of a traumatic event the past (e.g., armed combat, airplane crash, rape, or assault) and you now have any of these problems:
  - Flashbacks
t  - Nightmares.
  - Hyperarousal.
  - Difficulty concentrating.
  - Irritability.
  - Grief.

- You suffer from a medical illness that you are unable to cope with or that leads you to neglect proper treatment.
  - You withdraw from friends, relatives, and coworkers and/or blow up at them at the slightest annoyance.

For More Information on Stress, Contact:
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
800.355.NIOSH (355-6474)
www.cdc.gov/niosh

Get Free Health Information On Over 700 Health Topics From:
HealthyLifeNext
www.HealthyLearn.com

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