

# Stress and Your Health



Did you know that over 80% of all illness and disease today anywhere in the world can be linked back to one common element...STRESS!

## Medical conditions caused or aggravated by stress:

Heart disease	High blood pressure	Heartburn	Ulcers
Chronic pain	Infertility	Migraines	PMS
Skin problems	Diabetes	Asthma	Obesity
Autoimmune diseases	Irritable bowel syndrome	Decreased immunity to acute colds and influenza	Allergies

*Proper stress management may help reduce the potential of dealing with chronic diseases later.*

## GUIDELINES FOR REDUCING AND MANAGING STRESS

1. **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so eat a nutrient-dense diet of whole, organic foods that help to nurture your body.

- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.
- Reduce caffeine and sugar. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.



2. **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.

3. **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

4. **Think positive thoughts and be grateful.** Look for the good in a situation or person. Positive thoughts and gratitude come back to you.

5. **Have a "Take Charge" approach to life with time management.** By planning and setting goals, more can be accomplished with less effort and time. Be assertive by saying "no" firmly and sincerely when you should.

6. **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress. Learn to ask for help if you need it.

7. **Learn to recognize your individual stress signals.** Listen to your body so you can recognize your individual stress signals such as headaches, muscle tension, or a nervous feeling.

8. **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.

## STRESS REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

Go for a walk.	Spend time in nature.	Talk to a supportive friend.
Write in your journal.	Take a long bath.	Play with a pet.
Work in your garden.	Get a massage.	Curl up with a good book.
Take a yoga class.	Listen to music.	Watch a comedy
Use aromatherapy.	Practice meditation.	Use Biofeedback
Have a good workout.	Use breathing techniques.	Try Autogenics or Guided Imagery.

RESOURCE: Seaward, Brian Luke. *Achieving the Mind-Body-Spirit Connection*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2005.

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