



TO YOUR HEALTH

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

Stress Less!

SIMPLE WAYS TO MANAGE THE STRESS IN YOUR LIFE

Feeling a little stressed lately? Join the club. Everyone feels stress sometimes. And contrary to what many may think, stress isn't always bad. It's actually a survival response. It helps you leap into action in the face of a threat. Short-term stress can even help you perform—you're more able to ace an interview or meet a project deadline. But when stress lasts a long time, it may also harm your health. Your body is constantly acting as if it were in immediate danger.

There's a really big body of research now that says that chronic stress promotes inflammation. Inflammation is associated with many diseases, including heart disease, cancer, arthritis, and some mental health conditions. Stress may also affect your metabolism—the chemical changes in the body that release energy and produce the substances you need to grow, move, and stay healthy.

It's important for your health and well-being to learn how to cope with stress. Fortunately, researchers have found several healthy and effective ways to manage and relieve stress. These techniques can help you to feel calmer and more relaxed.

DE-STRESS STRATEGIES

Recognize when you're stressed. It's critical that you're able to identify when you're stressed beyond a normal level. Feeling busy isn't necessarily a sign that you're overstressed, but if you're having trouble sleeping or experiencing headaches or stomachaches those could be key signs. Stress can also cause changes in appetite that lead you to gain or lose weight. Once you know you need to reduce stress, there are practical steps you can try:



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

Exercise regularly. Doing an activity you enjoy can also help with stress. This can be anything—from dancing to making art or getting out into nature or having fun with friends.

Get enough sleep. Making sure to get enough sleep is very important. People are more sensitive to stress when they don't have enough sleep. Aim for seven to eight hours of sleep a night.

Stay connected. Staying socially connected is important as close personal relationships are key to reducing stress. Reaching out to friends and family by phone, video chat, and email can help you stay in touch even when you're not able to see them in person.

Focus on good nutrition. Eating fruits and veggies along with whole grains and lean proteins gives your body the fuel it needs to better manage stress.

Try mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness teaches you to focus on being present in the moment. Research shows that simply being aware of what you're doing can improve well-being. For those starting to practice mindfulness, one size is not likely to fit all. Experts recommend starting modestly with three to five minutes, a few times a day. There are many mindfulness apps available that teach different techniques.

Take some deep breaths. The simple act of controlled breathing can bring stress relief. Breathing techniques can also be used to help people who are depressed or anxious. There are many different breathing techniques you can try. Practicing a few minutes a day can help you get started.



STRESS CHEAT SHEET

Feeling overwhelmed? Use this “cheat sheet” as your quick, go-to reference when you're feeling stressed.

- » See the signs. Recognize signs of excessive stress. These include difficulty sleeping, being easily angered or irritable, feeling depressed, and low energy.
- » Move every day. Just 30 minutes per day of walking can help boost your mood and reduce stress.
- » Spend time on self-care. Schedule regular times for a relaxing activity. Activities that use mindfulness or breathing exercises, such as meditation, yoga, or tai chi, may help.
- » Get enough sleep. Adults need about seven or more hours of sleep per night.
- » Set goals and priorities. Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say “no” to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much.
- » Build a social support network. Stay connected with people who can provide emotional support.