

Stress Management

What is stress management?

Stress management is the mastery of specific skills that help reduce the negative effects of stress on the body.

Techniques of stress management include diaphragmatic breathing, mental imaging, and progressive muscle relaxation.

How does stress occur?

Both normal and unusual events produce stress in our lives. Stress may have unhealthy effects on our bodies.

What are the symptoms of stress?

Symptoms of stress vary from person to person, but some general signs are:

- ◆ chronic fatigue
- ◆ change in appetite
- ◆ increase in alcohol, drug, or cigarette use
- ◆ change in bowel or bladder habits
- ◆ body aches and pains not caused by exercise
- ◆ change in sleeping or waking patterns
- ◆ change in behavior or emotional patterns.

How long do the effects of stress last?

Stress is a part of living. You can't avoid it. What you can change, however, is how you adapt to the stresses of life. This is important because if stress is not handled in a way that is acceptable to your body over a long time, diseases and breakdown in body functions are more likely to occur.

How can I take care of myself?

Taking care of yourself starts with recognizing the unhealthy ways you may deal with stress (for example, drinking too much alcohol or eating unhealthy meals).

You can then try a healthier approach.

The following recommendations are some of the ways you can reduce the effects of stress on your life:

- ◆ Exercise for 30 minutes at least three times a week.
- ◆ Recognize the things that upset you and try to develop a positive attitude toward those you cannot avoid.
- ◆ Develop methods for relaxation; for example, talk with supportive people, listen to music, watch movies, take walks.
- ◆ Learn to use relaxation techniques, such as mental imaging, diaphragmatic breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation.
- ◆ Get adequate, regular amounts of rest and sleep (6 to 10 hours a night).
- ◆ Eat three to six small, balanced meals a day.
- ◆ Drink less coffee and alcohol.
- ◆ Drink four to eight glasses of water a day.
- ◆ Use positive thoughts and humor to overcome negative thoughts.
- ◆ Seek professional help for dealing with especially stressful events in your life.



Developed by Phyllis G. Cooper, R.N., M.N., and McKesson Clinical Reference Systems.

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