> Stress and your health

Stress is the body's way of responding to an experience. It can be general and can show up in many ways. Stress will happen. Finding healthy ways to cope with stress can have a positive impact on your health.

Causes of stress

Internal and external factors can cause stress. Both are reasons that stress develops.

Examples of internal factors are:

> - Negative self talk
> - Too high of expectations
> - Not being able to accept challenges

Examples of external factors are:

> - Worry about relationships with friends and family members
> - Work related issues
> - Chronic health issues
> - Major life changes
> - Financial problems

Signs and symptoms of stress

The body is unable to tell the difference between physical and mental threats. If you are around things that stress you out often or for long periods of time, the body is continually dealing with the stress. Feeling stressed for a long time can cause harm to your health by:

> - Increasing blood pressure
> - Lowering the immune system
> - Increasing the risk of stroke or heart attack
> - Making you age faster

Stress can present itself as pain of any kind,mix up sleeping patterns, and cause digestive problems and skin conditions. It can make you feel down and even lead to depression.

Dealing with stress

Get in the habit of knowing when you are becoming stressed. What are the signs that you are stressed out? When you know how your body deals with stress you can take action early on to keep your stress level low. You cannot eliminate stress, but you can control how you respond to stress and stressful events.

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Healthy ways to deal with stress

> Learn to say no. Don't take on more than you can handle.

> Express your feelings. Talk to a trusted person or a healthcare professional about your stressors.

> Set time aside for relaxation to decrease stress. Muscle relaxation, deep breathing and meditation can be helpful ways to lower stress levels.

> Exercise. Physical activity can help reduce stress levels. Even a 10-minute walk can do the trick.

> End your day with an "I am thankful for" list to focus on the positive parts of the day and the things you are thankful for.

> Eat a healthy diet with three meals a day. This will improve your energy and moods, and will keep stress levels lower.

> Do something you enjoy, such as read, listen to music or play with a pet.

> Spend time with people who are positive and supportive.

> Use humor. Laughing lowers stress levels.

> Get plenty of sleep. Most people need at least eight hours each night.

Find more information on coping with stress

> **American Diabetes Association**
diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/mental-health/stress.html

> **American Heart Association**
heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/StressManagement/Stress-Management_UCM_001082_SubHomePage.jsp

> **Mayo Clinic**
mayoclinic.com/health/stress-management/MY00435

Get more online. Log in to myModa at modahealth.com to get more out of your health plan.

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