



> Stress

April

Stress: what is it good for?

Our everyday lives are filled with all types of stress. Deadlines, frustrations and various demands seem to greet us at every turn. Stress isn't always bad, however. It can help you rise to an occasion, perform under pressure, challenge you to do your best and even keep you safe in dangerous situations.

Simply put, stress is your body's way of responding to any change, demand or threat. Physical changes can include an increased heart rate or blood pressure and tightening of the muscles — all of which sharpen your senses and enhance your focus.

Stress — both good and bad — is unavoidable, but knowing how your body reacts to stress and understanding how to manage its effects is key to staying mentally and physically healthy.

Source: *The American Institute of Stress*

Don't stress out. Stay healthy!

Always getting sick? You could be suffering from the effects of a weakened immune system due to stress.

Your immune system is a collection of billions of cells travelling through your bloodstream, in and out of tissues and organs, defending your body against foreign bodies like bacteria and viruses. When you're stressed, your immune system's ability to fight off these foreign bodies is reduced, making you more susceptible to infections.

Managing stress is key to keeping your immune system healthy. Through physical activity, a well-balanced sleep schedule and doing things you enjoy, like working in your garden, cooking healthy meals or walking your dog, you can help keep your immune system strong and keep illness at bay.

Source: *American Psychological Association*

Trivia time:

Is all stress bad?

Answer: No! Some stress is good and can help us do our best and perform well under pressure.



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Reduce stress, feel better

Although stress isn't always bad, it's an inevitable part of our lives. Luckily, there are several ways to help control and reduce stress, through various stress management techniques.

- > Open up to a friend. Sometimes just talking to another person can release hormones that reduce stress and ease your feelings of frustration.
- > Get moving. Physical activity is a great way to manage stress – walking, jogging, swimming and dancing are all particularly effective.
- > Relax. Yoga, meditation and deep breathing all activate your body's relaxation response, helping lower stress levels.
- > Eat right. Well-nourished, healthy bodies are better prepared to cope with stress. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and keep caffeine and sugar to a minimum.
- > Sleep more. Being tired can increase stress and lower your ability to keep your cool in stressful situations.

Source: *Help Guide*

What's a stressor?

Both physical and psychological, stressors are anything that cause the release of stress hormones. A painful injury, being overloaded at work, an argument with a friend – even having a baby – are all things that can cause stress.

The key to successfully dealing with stressors is learning to adjust and adapt. Asking for help, maintaining supportive relationships, physical exercise and a good diet can help reduce stress and help you maintain a healthy life balance.

Sources: *Cleveland Clinic and Stress Management Society*

Don't stress your heart

There are several ways stress can affect your heart – from anxiety (which makes your heart work harder) and stress-induced fatty acid deposits (that decrease blood flow) to stress hormones which may actually damage the lining of arteries.

Stress can also interfere with your body's ability to repair itself, making it even more important to manage stress. Keep your heart happy with a healthy diet, regular exercise, relaxation time and doing the things you enjoy most.

Source: *Next Avenue*

Trivia time:

How many types of stressors are there?

Answer: Two. Stress can be physical as well as psychological.