

## How to Manage Stress

Do you worry a lot about family, work or money? Stress is the body's natural reaction to the pressures of everyday life. When you encounter a stressful event, your brain triggers an alert to the rest of the body. The body responds by producing adrenaline to elevate blood pressure and increase energy.

In some cases this increase in energy is good. It can help us complete projects, take stressful exams or avoid dangerous situations. In many cases, the stress response can increase our productivity.

However, long-term stress can interrupt many of the body's natural processes and increase your risk of getting diseases. For example, stress lowers the immune system putting you more at-risk for disease, disrupts the digestive system, and interferes with the nervous system making you more susceptible to depression. However, the real question is how to manage stress when it become too much to handle.

People choose to manage their stress in different ways. First, it is important to identify the things that trigger a stressful response. Keep a journal or make a list of your obligations. Choose one of them to focus on improving for the week. Other things that may help manage your stress level include:

- Positive thinking. Avoid negative self-talk and engage in positive thinking strategies.
- Meditate. Breathe deeply, take time to reflect, or walk while you meditate.
- Take care of yourself. Eat regular, balanced meals including breakfast. Eat nutrient-rich foods instead of junk food.
- Exercise. Many people report feeling more energetic and active following exercise.
- Develop friendships both at work and outside. Talk out your stressful feelings with the people close to you.
- Choose battles wisely. Know when to argue and when to let things go. Count to ten before you react.
- Have an outlet. Choose a hobby that can help you relax such as reading or crafts.
- Seek help if you need it. If none of these suggestions work for you, talk about stress with your health care provider.