

FitFacts®



Decreasing Stress

STRESS IS A NATURAL PART OF OUR DAILY LIVES. MOST STRESS IS SHORT-LIVED, BUT WHEN IT HANGS AROUND LONG-TERM OUR HEALTH REALLY BEGINS TO SUFFER. CHRONIC NEGATIVE STRESS INCREASES OUR RISK FOR ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, HEART ATTACK, STROKE, AND TYPE2 DIABETES (AND THE LIST GOES ON!).

IS STRESS INTERFERING WITH YOUR DAILY LIFE?

Try the following tips to get on the path to better emotional and physical health:

1. **Exercise!** Exercise is a proven stress reducer. Research has repeatedly shown that people who are physically active on a regular basis have less stress than those who do not.
2. **Be aware of what is causing your stress.** Be mindful of which negative thoughts occupy your mind throughout your day. Write them down. Do you notice any patterns? Is there anything that you can do about your worries? Develop a plan for dealing with issues that can be resolved. Try to let go of things that you have no control over.
3. **Strive for a positive outlook.** Are you a 'glass half-empty' person? Turn negative thinking around by striving to see the good in every situation. Attempt to view changes and challenges as opportunities for growth.
4. **Focus on building positive relationships.** Strengthen relationships that make you feel good and steer clear of negative, hostile ones. If you are experiencing relationship problems with a spouse or family member, seek counseling or reach out to supportive friends and family for help.
5. **Get adequate sleep.** Getting enough rest allows you to deal more effectively with stress.
6. **Have realistic expectations.** We live in a fast-paced world that values "busy-ness." Examine your schedule and prioritize your "to-do" list. Can you realistically accomplish all that you have set out to do for the day? Focus on what you accomplished at the end of the day rather than what you didn't get done.
7. **Have some "me" time.** Often times, we experience stress simply because we don't take any time for ourselves. Schedule time to do something that you enjoy, whether it is taking a relaxing bath, spending time with friends, or learning a new hobby. Write this on the calendar just as you would any other important appointment.

8. **Explore relaxing activities** such as meditation, deep-breathing exercises, yoga, and tai-chi.

9. **Talk with a mental health professional** if you are having a hard time managing stress on your own. View the time and money spent as an investment in your emotional and physical health and wellness.

10. **Live your healthiest lifestyle.** The importance of eating a healthy diet and incorporating activity into your daily life simply cannot be overlooked. These are perhaps the most important aspects of [living a "less-stressed" life](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)