



Reduce Stress Naturally



CHALLENGE
Manage stress
in natural,
healthy ways

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Reduce Stress Naturally."
2. To complete the challenge, manage stress in healthy ways on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Everyone experiences stress at some time in their life, from bad things as well as good. Financial woes, divorce, illness, or the death of a loved one can be very stressful. Getting married or starting a new job can be too. You're bound to encounter stress at some point. But how you deal with stress can make all the difference in your health and happiness.

A recent study in the *Journal of Aging Research* reported that people were 50-percent more likely to die early if they were in a state of stress all the time. And 3-6 major life events in a year created a seriously unhealthy level of stress. But it didn't for everyone. Those who were able to manage their stress effectively – and in most cases naturally – did not die early. In fact, they were healthier and happier too.

The Toll that Stress Can Take

About 75 to 90 percent of all doctor visits are related to stress, according to the American Institute of Stress. Chronic stress has been linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, an increased risk of infection, anxiety, depression, and poor control of diabetes.

In a recent study of middle-aged Danish nurses, researchers found that heart disease doubled for those with high levels of stress at work. In a separate study of about 25,000 people, researchers found that stress contributed to one-third of all heart attacks.

When you experience a stressful event, adrenaline and cortisol flood your circulatory system to help you take swift action. But if a stressful situation isn't resolved, it can ruin your sleep, damage your heart, and affect your memory and mental health.

Take the Stress Quiz

How well do you manage stress in your life? Take this quiz to find out.

Yes No

- It's difficult for me to stay calm when I'm frustrated.
- I feel angry, distracted, or moody frequently.
- I worry excessively about work, money, health, or my relationships.
- I often feel overwhelmed, lonely, or depressed.
- I have trouble with eating or substance abuse.
- I commonly have headaches, nausea, dizziness, bowel discomfort, or rapid heartbeat.

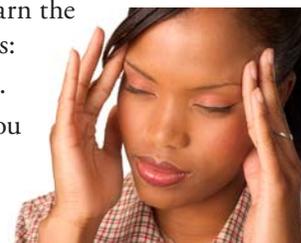
If you answered "Yes" to any of these questions, stress may have taken up residence in your life. Too much stress can cause emotional and behavioral problems. It can impair your memory and judgment. And it can cause serious health problems – all avoidable.

Source: American Institute of Stress

Learn the Warning Signs of Stress

To manage stress effectively, learn the warning signs of excessive stress:

- You have sleep disturbances.
- You lose your appetite, or you want to eat all the time.
- You can't stop thinking about your problems.
- You become unproductive and just give up.
- You have frequent headaches, backaches, digestive problems, fatigue, anxiety, anger, high blood pressure, or depression.
- You have trouble with relationships.
- You turn to substance abuse to help you cope with stress.



Identify Your Source of Stress

Anything can make you feel stressed out, even something that could be considered "good." It's your reaction that matters. Common stressors include:

- ✓ **Work-related events:** coworker/boss conflicts, excessive workload, noise, deadlines, lack of knowledge, an outdated computer or tools needed to do your job.

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✓ **Home life:** chores, caring for children or elderly family members, major family conflict.

✓ **Major life events:** birth or death in the family, marriage, divorce, moving, job change, going to court, abuse, accidents.

Try these 7 relaxation techniques
tinyurl.com/boamc5

✓ **Personal/emotional issues:** loneliness, depression, anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, weight gain.

✓ **Financial stress:** lack of money, overspending, excessive debt.

✓ **Serious illness:** asthma, heart problem, cancer, diabetes.

✓ **Addiction:** using drugs, drinking, gambling.

Stress at Work

If your job stresses you out, talk to your supervisor. If you're ready for a new job, be selective. You don't want to end up in the same kind of stressful situation.

Source: American Institute of Stress.



Easy Ways to Reduce Stress Naturally

When you start feeling stressed out, take action to keep stress from harming your health. You may not be able to resolve your problems right away, but you can change the way you react to them. Here's how:

- **Breathe deeply.** Take 10 breaths of fresh outdoor air. Deep breathing has a calming effect that can reduce stressful feelings such as anger, anxiety, and fear. Making this a regular habit can also help lower blood pressure, increase your energy level, and help you sleep better.
- **Exercise.** Just 20 to 30 minutes of daily walking, yoga, or another form of exercise can improve your mood as well as physical health. Physical activity burns up stress hormones, and stimulates the mind to help you relax and think better about your problems.
- **Do something you really enjoy.** Take up a hobby like painting, cooking, photography, fishing, or playing music. This can take your mind off the stressful things in your life and help you see your situation in a different way.
- **Learn to communicate better.** Listen to what others say. Give clear, assertive statements about what you need to accomplish your work or improve your relationship. Be realistic and willing to compromise to solve a problem.
- **Get enough sleep.** Aim to sleep 7 to 8 hours a night. If that's a challenge, take a nap during the day too. Adequate sleep can eliminate stress and restore the body to a relaxed state.

- **Live within a budget.** Overspending, debt, and worrying about money are common sources of stress. Create a budget, and live within your means.
- **Talk over a problem with a friend,** your supervisor, or religious leader. Just sharing your concerns about something often brings relief, support, and courage to carry on.
- **Join a support group.** Research shows that people who belong to support groups cope better with anxiety, stress, depression, illness, and other crises in their lives.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** You'll cope with stress better if you're getting the vitamins and nutrients you need. Eat a healthy breakfast every day. Cut back on sweets, soda, and fast food. Eat more fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, and whole grains.
- **Limit caffeine.** Caffeine raises stress hormones, which can make it difficult to relax and sleep.
- **Just say "no."** You can't do everything all at once at work or at home. Learn to say "no" if you need to. Delegate responsibilities. Ask for help. Set priorities and be realistic about what you can handle.
- **Laugh more.** Watch a funny movie. Read a joke book. Or look up funny videos on YouTube. Research shows that laughing

reduces stress and releases endorphins that can improve your mood and your health.

- **Don't sweat the small stuff.** You'll feel better if you don't let things like traffic jams or crying babies bother you. If you get upset easily, practice correcting yourself when something sets you off. If you feel the urge to shout at a careless driver, stop yourself. Replace that thought with something like, "He must be late for an important meeting," or "She must be having a bad day."
- **Get professional help if needed.** A professional counselor can help you deal with financial worries or personal problems. Or you can work with a dietician, fitness coach, spiritual advisor, or life coach. Getting help is a healthy way to reduce stress.

Life can be intense at times. But you can control how you respond to those challenges. Smile. Take a deep breath. Or put one of these natural stress busters to the test.

Find a support group in your area
tinyurl.com/9wumtbn

50 ways to reduce stress
tinyurl.com/a7vlpaj

Journal of Aging Research.; American Institute of Stress.; American Psychological Association.; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.; Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicines.; National Institutes of Health.



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Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you manage stress in natural, healthy ways.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you managed stress in healthy ways. You must Reduce Stress Naturally on 22 days this month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____								
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____								
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____								
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____								
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____								

_____ Number of days this month I managed stress in natural, healthy ways

_____ Number of days this month I did aerobic exercise



Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____