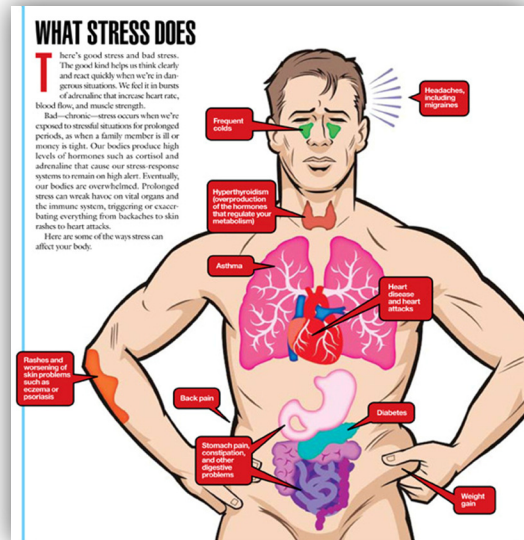


De-Stress Out!

Stress is the normal reaction to situations perceived as challenges, threats, or even opportunities. It is our **reaction** (physical, mental, emotional) to events rather than the events themselves that cause stress.



Highly stressed individuals are at greater risk for **multiple health conditions**, including: cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression and anxiety, fatigue, obesity, and musculoskeletal pain.



In fact, **psychological stress** and the associated chronic inflammatory response have been *linked* to virtually **all chronic conditions**¹

The **Relaxation Response** is meant to counter the stress (“flight or fight”) response. It is a physical state of deep rest that changes the *physical* and *emotional* response to stress. When eliciting the relaxation response: metabolism, heart rate and blood pressure **decrease**, muscles **relax**, and breathing **slows**.

Eliciting the Relaxation Response

2 Main Steps

1. Repeat a word, sound, short phrase, prayer or muscular activity
2. Passively disregard everyday thoughts that come to mind and return to the repetition

Put it into Action

1. Pick a focus word, short phrase, or prayer that is rooted in your belief system
2. Sit quietly in a comfortable position
3. Close your eyes
4. Relax your muscles from head to toe
5. Breathe slowly and naturally. As you exhale, repeat your focus word or phrase
6. Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing, return to your repetition
7. Continue for 10-20 minutes
8. Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly, allowing other thoughts to return
9. Practice the technique once or twice daily. Try before breakfast and dinner.

“The ideal is to develop a **routine**, a time to bring forth the **relaxation response** that becomes as much a part of the day as *brushing your teeth*.”

10 Relaxation Techniques to Reduce Stress On-the-Spot

- ✓ **Meditate.** Any repetitive action can be a source of meditation. Walking, swimming, painting – any activity that helps keep your attention in the present moment. Try 5-10 minutes a day.
- ✓ **Picture yourself relaxed.** Is your mind too talkative to meditate? Try creating a peaceful “dreamscape.” Replace stress with an image that evokes a sense of calm (e.g., fantasy island)
- ✓ **Breathe deeply.** Imagine your center as a deep, powerful place. Feel your breath coming and going as your mind stays focused there. Repeat 10 times, relax more fully each time.
- ✓ **Look around you.** Mindfulness means focusing on one activity at a time, forget multi-tasking! Stress will take a back seat as long as you focus on something in the present.
- ✓ **Drink hot tea.** Consider going green. Coffee raises levels of the stress hormone (i.e., cortisol) while green tea offers health and beauty benefits.
- ✓ **Show some love.** Cuddle your pet, snuggle your spouse, or talk to a friend about the good things in your lives. Physical contact may help lower blood pressure and decrease stress hormone.
- ✓ **Try self-massage.** Place both hands on your shoulders and neck. Squeeze with your fingers and palms. Rub vigorously, keeping shoulders relaxed.
- ✓ **Take a time out.** When your temper is about to erupt, find a quiet place to sit or lie down and put the stressful situation on hold.
- ✓ **Try a musical detour.** When the going gets rough, take a musical stress detour by aligning your heartbeat with the slow tempo of a relaxing song (e.g., classical music).
- ✓ **Take an attitude break.** Thirty seconds is enough time to shift your heart’s rhythm from stressed to relaxed. Envision anything that triggers a positive feeling (e.g., child, pet).

Stress-Busting Foods



Oranges



Spinach



Fatty Fish



Green Tea



Raw Vegetables

Resource: www.webmd.com , www.massgeneral.org