

How does stress affect my health?

Stress is not a diagnosis – it is a symptom. Your body is telling you that it is overloaded. The human body was not designed to handle the magnitude or duration of 21st century stress.

When the demands of life are greater than your resources, stress can initiate or contribute to many different illnesses.

The body responds to acute stress by increasing heart rate and blood pressure, and slowing circulation to the digestive tract, in other words, initiating your fight/flight response.

Ongoing stress produces other changes in your body that keep you in a state of being ready for fight/flight. Blood sugar can be dramatically affected, as can your immune system, digestive system, cardiovascular system and reproductive system. Stress can also interfere with your rate of metabolism and often leads to weight gain. Chronic stress will tax your emotions and your relationships.

Something has got to give. If you don't have the luxury of not working or switching to something that you are passionate about you need to remove other stressors from your day to day life; chemical, physical and emotional. 3 doctors.org lists some of these stresses as crowds of people, unproductive meetings, financial concerns, **long telephone calls**, negative emotions, cold or hot weather conditions, sunbathing, lack of sleep, coffee (more than 1 cup), smoking, dieting (low calories), high carbohydrate breakfast, too much sugar and starch, **Violent Movies**, chemicals, strong smells of any type including perfume, loud noise, low quantity or quality sleep, overwork, no exercise or too much exercise, and arguments.

Unfortunately, most people crave quick fixes like caffeine, sugar and alcohol, that actually make the physiological effects of stress worse.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DECREASING STRESS

Cut down or eliminate Caffeine, sugar and alcohol. They all compound the burden on the adrenal glands that were designed to handle stress. Eat nourishing foods, **not** refined carbohydrates like bread, pasta and most cereals. Cutting out the refined carbs will decrease that need for a nap at 2 pm! Carbohydrates should be whole grains (beans, lentils, quinoa), fruits and vegetables. Lightly steaming vegetables will make them easier to digest.

Eat healthy proteins – wild fish, organic poultry and bison.

DON'T EAT AT YOUR DESK. WORK STRESS WILL DECREASE THE BLOOD SUPPLY TO YOUR DIGESTIVE TRACT SO YOU WON'T ABSORB THE NUTRIENTS THAT YOU NEED.

Sleep earlier! Each hour of sleep before midnight is equivalent to 2 hours of sleep after midnight. We kid ourselves when we think we do our best work at 1 a.m. Sleep in a dark room and move the alarm clock away from the bed so the LED light isn't glaring at you.

Exercise. You do have the time, because you will be more productive after you have exercised. You will make up in quality what you spent in time! Exercise increases endorphins so combats the effects of stress.

Don't watch the news!

If the feeling of being stressed is prolonged, naturopathic medicine can help to guide you through it.