



Stress Awareness

What is stress?

Life asks a lot of us – spouses, jobs, arguments with friends, sick pets – and at a certain point we have more to deal with than we can handle emotionally.¹ That's when stress kicks in.

It's your response to danger

You know the feeling – sweaty palms, racing heartbeat, an upset stomach. This is stress, and it's how your body responds to physical dangers. The hormones that are released used to help people face physical threats. But since we don't fight saber-toothed tigers anymore, the hormones aren't as helpful.

Serious side effects

Nowadays, stress tends to last for weeks or longer due to the demands of modern life, instead of minutes or hours. Your system is in overdrive and these hormones can disrupt some of your body's processes. This can lead to:

- Higher risk of heart disease.
- Obesity.
- Digestive problems.
- Memory loss.
- Insomnia.
- Depression.²

Don't panic, though. You can do plenty to fight the side effects.

Tame your stress

If you can't get rid of the things that cause the stress, then you'll have to find more power to deal with it. Here are some activities that can help:

- **Get out and exercise**
Consider walking, jogging, biking or anything else that gets you active.
- **Laugh out loud**
Laughing lightens your mental load and does good things for your body.
- **Talk to friends and family**
They can distract you, provide support, help you weather life's up and downs.
- **Do yoga**
Yoga uses both physical and mental moves to create peace of body and mind. This helps you relax and manage stress. Try yoga on your own or find a class in your area.
- **Get more rest**
Sleep is when your brain and body recharge. Get the right amount and you'll improve your mood and energy level.
- **See a counselor or therapist**
They can help you find the sources of your stress and learn new coping tools.³

Try some of these tips to live your life with less stress. And talk to your doctor if you're feeling really stressed. Sometimes other health problems have similar symptoms.²



Sources:

- (1) American Institute of Stress (2009).
- (2) <http://www.mayoclinic.com> American Institute of Stress, Stress Management (March 19, 2009): stress.org.
- (3) <http://www.mayoclinic.com> Stress relievers: Top 10 Picks to Tame Stress (September 28, 2010).

This information is intended for educational purposes only, and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your physician for advice about changes that may affect your health.