

Stress



Stress is what you feel when you react to pressure. Pressure can come from things like work, family, money, illness, or the way you feel about yourself.

Everyone handles stress differently.

The Stress Response

The **Stress Response** is your body's way of helping you meet challenges and react under pressure. It works by releasing chemicals into your body that are normally helpful.

However, if it continues for a long time, it can affect your physical health and wellbeing in negative ways.

Signs Your Stress Response is Overworking

Changes in Feelings

- Feeling sad, edgy, irritable, anxious, or panicked much of the time.
- Blaming other people for bad things that happen to you.
- Only seeing the down side of situations.
- Feeling like things that you used to enjoy aren't fun now.

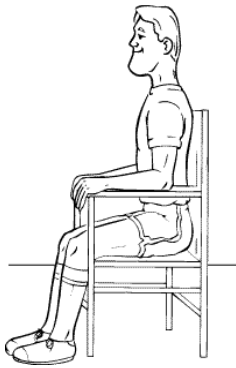
Changes in the Body

- Dry mouth or skin problems.
- Loss of appetite or eating constantly.
- Headaches, stomachaches, diarrhea or constipation.
- Trouble sleeping.

How to Lower Your Stress Level

- **Don't over schedule yourself**- make time for things you love.
- **Make a list of what is important**- work on them one by one.
- **Have healthy habits**- exercise, eat well, and sleep.
- **Relax**- calm and unwind everyday. Try one of the activities listed on the other side.

Relaxation Activities



Breathing Exercise

- Sit upright.
- Support your arms on a side chair or on your lap.
- Inhale slowly through your nose and into your belly for 4 seconds.
- Hold this breath for 1-2 seconds.
- Exhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.
- Pause before taking another breath.
- Try this exercise several times daily. It takes practice.

Muscle Relaxation Exercise

- Start at your feet and work your way up to your head.
- Take a deep breath, tighten and hold each muscle for 5 seconds.
- Then release the tension while breathing out.
- Repeat with each body part as you move up the body.

