

Stress will always be a part of life. It is our reaction to a challenging situation or event that causes a physical and emotional response.

Some stress is good for you. It drives you to get moving, get things done and reach goals. However, too much stress can lead to chronic health problems.

Recognizing the different signs of stress is the first step to dealing with it, both now and in the future.

Medical Mutual

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Stress

Tips for Good Health



Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Physical

- Headaches, muscle tension or stiffness
- Heartburn, nausea or irregular bowel movements
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Sweating

Emotional

- Anxiety, worry or fear
- Increased anger and frustration
- Depression or a feeling of being overwhelmed

Mental

- Problems concentrating or remembering
- Poor judgment or difficulty making decisions
- Confusion

Behavioral

- Yelling or arguing, moodiness or crying
- Doing poorly at work
- Becoming withdrawn or easily distracted
- Abusing alcohol, tobacco, drugs or caffeine
- Increased desire to over- or under-eat
- Sleeping too much or not enough
- Excessive shopping or gambling

Decide How You Will Handle Stress

Knowing what triggers your stress, how you feel when you are under stress and deciding how you will handle future stressful events will lead to a healthier, happier you.

Consider trying these ideas the next time you feel stressed or overwhelmed:

- If you feel the **urge to scream or yell**, stop and count to 10. Repeat until you feel calmer.
- To help relax **tense muscles**, take a slow deep breath in through your nose, hold it for three seconds and exhale slowly through your mouth. This will also help you think more clearly.
- Quiet any **negative thoughts and reactions** by closing your eyes and silently chanting to yourself, "It will be okay." (Include some deep breaths to be even more effective.)
- Escape from the stressful event by excusing yourself for a moment. Take a quick walk around the floor, building or house. If this is not an option, close your eyes and try to picture yourself in a quiet, peaceful place.

Move from Surviving to Thriving

Break the stress cycle and make **you** a priority! Manage stress daily so you can be at your best.

- Try to be active every day. Make sure it is something you enjoy. Go for a walk or run, dance or practice yoga.
- Smile or laugh every day. Laughter improves mood and increases blood flow and oxygen to help reduce stress.
- Know your limits. It's okay to say no. Stay organized by using a to-do list. Take 10 minutes each evening to get things ready for the morning.
- Speak up. Talking through your feelings can help you get a different view on what is causing you stress. Wipe out negative thoughts and train your brain to think positively.

For More Information

Don't let stress be a normal part of your daily life. If you are becoming overwhelmed by stress, here are some websites that provide help (type "stress" in the search box):

- American Institute of Stress: stress.org
- American Psychological Association: apa.org
- American Heart Association: heart.org
- National Institute of Mental Health: nimh.nih.gov