

Effects of Stress on the Body



Stress is the physical, mental and emotional reaction you experience as a result of changes and demands in your life. There is good stress, such as getting married, a job promotion or retirement, and there is bad stress, such as deadlines, divorce or the death of a loved one. Stress can be caused by one big event or the buildup of many small events. Whether you are experiencing good or bad stress, remember, how you react is within your control.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Ongoing stress can affect your body, thoughts, feelings, and behavior. According to Mayo Clinic, stress that is left unchecked can contribute to health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Common signs and symptoms of stress include headache, muscle tension or pain, irritability or anger, and alcohol, tobacco and/or drug use.

Other symptoms of stress include:

- chest pain
- fatigue
- change in sex drive
- upset stomach
- overeating or not eating enough
- anxiety
- sleep problems
- lack of motivation
- depression
- social withdrawal

Ways to Manage Stress

The following tips can help you manage short- and long-term stress:

Take a break. It may seem difficult to get away from a big work project, a crying baby or a growing credit card bill, but give yourself permission to step away. Even just a 20-minute break can give you a new perspective.

Exercise. Exercise is good for your mind as well as your body. Regular exercise is best for stress reduction, but even a 10-minute walk, run, swim, or dance session during a stressful time can give an immediate effect that can last for hours.

Smile and laugh. Our brains are interconnected with our emotions and facial expressions. Laughing and smiling can help relieve tension.

Get social support. When you share your concerns or feelings with another person, it relieves stress. Make sure the person you choose is someone you trust who understands and validates you.

Meditate. Meditation and/or mindful prayer help the mind and body to relax and focus. Being mindful can help you see a new perspective, develop self-compassion and forgiveness. When you practice being mindful, you can release emotions that might be causing physical stress on the body. A quick meditation can bring instant results.



Learn to recognize events or activities that cause you stress and take steps to manage them.