

Stress Management



When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in danger. Your body produces hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and give you a burst of energy. This reaction is called the fight-or-flight stress response.

Some stress is normal and can help if you need to work hard or react quickly. Stress can help you win a race or finish an important job on time. But if stress happens too often or lasts too long, it can be damaging. **Stress can lead to headaches, an upset stomach, back pain, and trouble sleeping. It can weaken your immune system, making it harder to fight off disease.**

How do you measure your stress level?

Sometimes it is clear where stress is coming from. You can count on stress during a major life change such as the death of a loved one, getting married, or having a baby. But it may not always be clear why you are feeling stressed. **It's important to figure out what is causing your stress.**

Everyone feels and responds to stress differently. Tracking your stress may help you understand it.

- Get a notebook
- Write down when something makes you feel stressed
- Write down how you reacted and what you did to deal with the stress

This may help you find out what is causing your stress and how much stress you feel. Then you can take steps to reduce the stress or handle it better.





How can you lower stress?

- **Manage your time.** You may get more done with less stress if you keep a day planner at your desk. Think about which things are most important, and do those first.
- **Deep breathing.** Sometimes stress comes from lack of oxygen. Breathe in two and out four seconds.
- **Take good care of yourself.** Get plenty of rest. Eat well. Don't use tobacco products. Limit how much alcohol you drink.
- **Social support.** People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better.
- **Meet with your health coach** for helpful techniques and goal setting on how to handle stress. Sometimes it is too much to handle alone. We are here to talk and listen to what is causing you stress.

Other tips to combat your stress:

- **Exercise.** Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress. Walking is a great way to get started. Join a yoga class to meet friends and get your blood pumping.
- **Write.** It can help to write about the things that are bothering you.
- **Let your feelings out.** Talk, laugh, cry, and express anger when you need to with someone you trust.
- **Do something you enjoy.** A hobby can help you relax. Volunteer work can be a great stress reliever.
- **Learn ways to relax your body.** Try breathing exercises, muscle relaxation exercises, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, Tai Chi, and Qi Gong.
- **Focus on the present.** Try meditation and imagery exercises. Listen to relaxing music. Look for the humor in life, since laughter really is the best medicine.

Your mental health can be difficult to talk about – but we're here to help you move forward with a plan to manage and reduce your stress.



Visit us at your health center today.