

**OPERATION**

**★ Live Well ★**



**Live Well Healthy Living Tips**

# CONTROL STRESS DON'T LET IT CONTROL YOU



# STRESS MANAGEMENT

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines stress as the brain's response to any demand.

There are at least three different types of stress, all of which carry physical and mental health risks:

- Routine stress related to the pressures of work, family, and other daily responsibilities.
- Acute stress brought about by a sudden negative change, such as losing a job, divorce, or illness.
- Traumatic stress, experienced in an event like a major accident, war, assault, or a natural disaster where one may be seriously hurt or in danger of being killed.

**Stress management** involves **controlling and reducing the tension** that occurs in stressful situations by making emotional and physical changes.

# STRESS TRIGGERS

**Emotional stress** usually occurs in situations people consider difficult or challenging. People may feel stressed in different situations.



**Physical stress** is a physical reaction of the body to various triggers. The pain experienced after surgery is an example of physical stress. Physical stress often leads to emotional stress, and emotional stress often occurs in the form of physical stress (e.g., **headaches, stomach cramps**).

# REGULAR STRESS VS CHRONIC STRESS

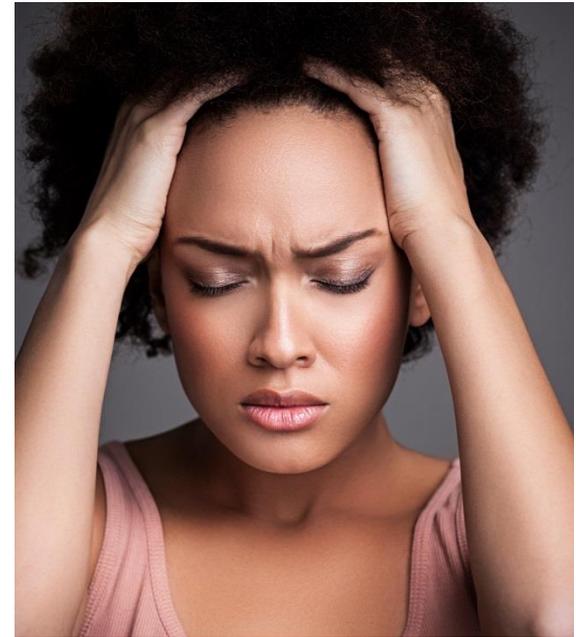
People experience stress everyday. It can stem from commuting to work, watching a scary movie, or life changes like moving, getting married or divorced. Other extreme changes, such as exposure to violence, can lead to traumatic stress reactions. Experiencing stress over a period of time is called chronic stress.

Chronic stress can have damaging effects on a person's mind and body.

Different people may feel it in different ways. Some people experience mainly **digestive symptoms**, while others may have **headaches, sleeplessness, depressed mood, anger, and irritability.**

# STRESS CAN AFFECT YOUR MIND

Of all the types of stress, the NIH reports that changes in health from **routine stress** may be hardest to notice at first. Because the source of routine stress tends to be more constant than in cases of acute or traumatic stress, the body gets no clear signal to return to normal functioning.



# STRESS CAN AFFECT YOUR BODY

People under chronic stress are prone to **more frequent and severe viral infections**, such as the flu or common cold, and vaccines, such as the flu shot, are less effective for them.

Also, continued strain on your body from routine stress may lead to serious **health problems**, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, anxiety disorder, and other illnesses.

# DEALING WITH STRESS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers the following tips for managing stressful times:

- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** They may seem to be a temporary fix to feel better, but in the long run they can create more problems and add to your stress - instead of take it away.
- **Find support.** Seek help from a partner, family member, friend, counselor, doctor, or clergy person.
- **Connect socially.** After a stressful event, it is easy to isolate yourself. Consider planning fun activities with your partner, children, or friends.

# AVOID STRESS BUILD UP

While stress is a part of our every day lives, the NIH lists some habits we can establish to avoid chronic stress and avoid its negative effects:

- **Take care of yourself.**
  - Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet
  - Exercise regularly
  - Get plenty of sleep
  - Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out—for example, treat yourself to a therapeutic massage
  - Maintain a normal routine
- **Stay active.** Take your mind off your problems by giving back - helping a neighbor, volunteering in the community. These can be positive ways to channel your feelings.

# SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Anger
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Sadness and other symptoms of depression
- Feeling powerless
- Crying
- Sleep problems
- Headaches, back pains, and stomach problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Tension and irritability
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Disbelief and shock
- Difficulty making decisions
- Being numb to one's feelings
- Loss of interest in normal activities
- Loss of appetite
- Nightmares and recurring thoughts about a traumatic event

# RESOURCES

The NIH fact sheet [Adult Stress – Frequently Asked Questions](#) offers information about stress, how it affects the body, overall health and ways to cope with stress.

The CDC's [Managing Stress](#) is an informational feature that describes symptoms of stress and offers advice on how to prevent them.

[Operation Live Well](#) – The Military Health System's campaign focused on leading a physically, mentally, socially and spiritually healthy lifestyle throughout the military community.

[TRICARE's Live Well](#) healthy living section of TRICARE.mil offers beneficiaries tips and information on how to live a well balanced life.

