

Stress Awareness

Do summer vacations leave you relaxed or fretful over travel and money? Do winter holidays fill you with joy or with worries about gift-giving and family gatherings? If you're feeling stressed over things and events that should be fun, it might be time to address your approach to stress. Take a few moments to learn how stress affects your health and what you can do about it.



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Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can provide a rush of energy when it's needed most, such as during a sports competition, important project or dangerous situation. In these instances you breathe faster, your heartbeat quickens, blood sugar rises to give you energy, and your brain uses more oxygen as it shifts into high alert.

These mechanisms are helpful when you need them. However, if you are stressed for a long time (a condition known as chronic stress), those high-alert changes become harmful.

Some people can sidestep or recover more quickly from stress than others can. You can boost this resilience by learning healthy ways to cope with stress.

Some healthy options to cope with stress are:

- Spend time with family and friends with whom you can talk and share your feelings.
- Exercise a little each day.
- Maintain a healthy diet.
- Get enough sleep.
- Practice mindfulness and meditation.

If you feel overwhelmed by stress, talk with a health-care provider or mental health professional. Medications or other therapies might help you cope. In the long run, reducing stress can help you slow down and enjoy time with the people and activities you really care about.

References:

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