

Managing Stress

Try the following stress management techniques to learn what works for you.

Physical activity:

- Start a physical activity program. Most experts recommend 150 minutes of aerobic activity per week.
- Decide on a specific type, amount, and level of physical activity. Fit this into your schedule so it can be part of your routine.
- Find a buddy to exercise with-it is more fun and it will encourage you to stick with your routine.
- You do not have to join a gym-20 minutes of brisk walking outdoors is enough.

Nutrition:

- Eat foods that improve your health and well-being. For example, increase the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat.
- Use the food guide plate to help you make healthy food choices.
- Eat normal-sized portions on a regular schedule.

Social support:

- Make an effort to socialize. Even though you may feel tempted to avoid people when you feel stressed, meeting friends usually helps people feel less stressed.
- Be good to yourself and others.

Relaxation:

- Learn about and try using relaxation techniques, such as guided imagery, listening to music, or practicing yoga or meditation. With some practice, these techniques should work for you.
- Listen to your body when it tells you to slow down or take a break.
- Make sure to get enough sleep. Good sleep habits are one of the best ways to manage stress.
- Take time for personal interests and hobbies.

Resources

If these stress management techniques do not work for you, there are professionals, such as licensed social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists, who can help. Schedule time with one of these mental health professionals to help you learn stress management strategies, including relaxation techniques. Support groups of various types are also available in most communities.

Source: Copyright 2014 National Institute of Health.
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001942.htm>



Possible signs of stress

- Anxiety
- Back pain
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Trouble sleeping or insomnia
- Problems with relationships
- Shortness of breath
- Stiff neck or jaw
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss



Start a stress journal

A stress journal can help you identify the regular stressors in your life and the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal. As you keep a daily log, you will begin to see patterns and common themes. Write down:

- What caused your stress (make a guess if you're unsure)
- How you felt, both physically and emotionally
- How you acted in response
- What you did to make yourself feel better

Source: Copyright HealthGuide.org
http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm

Stress and high blood pressure: What's the connection?

Stressful situations can cause your blood pressure to spike temporarily, but can stress also cause long-term high blood pressure? Could all those short-term stress-related blood pressure spikes add up and cause high blood pressure in the long term? Researchers aren't sure.

However, doing activities to reduce your blood pressure, such as exercising 30 to 60 minutes a day, can reduce your stress level. And if you've been diagnosed with high blood pressure, doing activities that can help you manage your stress and improve your health can make a long-term difference in lowering your blood pressure.

Linking stress and blood pressure challenging

Your body produces a surge of hormones when you're in a stressful situation. These hormones temporarily increase your blood pressure by causing your heart to beat faster and your blood vessels to narrow.

There's no proof that stress by itself causes long-term high blood pressure. It may be that other behaviors linked to stress — such as overeating, drinking alcohol and poor sleeping habits — cause high blood pressure. However, short-term stress-related spikes in your blood pressure added up over time may put you at risk of developing long-term high blood pressure.

It's possible that health conditions related to stress — such as anxiety, depression, and isolation from friends and family — may be linked to heart disease, but there's no evidence they're linked to high blood pressure. Instead, it may be that the hormones produced when you're emotionally stressed may damage your arteries, leading to heart disease. It may also be that being depressed may cause self-destructive behavior, such as neglecting to take your medications to control high blood pressure or other heart conditions.

High blood pressure risks increase over the long term

Increases in blood pressure related to stress can be dramatic. But once the stressor disappears, your blood pressure returns to normal. However, even temporary spikes in blood pressure — if they occur often enough — can damage your blood vessels, heart and kidneys in a way similar to long-term high blood pressure.

In addition, if you react to stress by smoking, drinking too much alcohol or eating unhealthy foods, you increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.

Source: The Mayo Clinic
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/stress-and-high-blood-pressure/art-20044190?pg=2>



Braised green beans & summer vegetables

Description

When green beans, summer squash and cherry tomatoes are plentiful in backyard gardens and farmers' markets, try this quick braise. We like the salty, nutty flavor of Parmesan, but you can use any flavorful cheese.

Ingredients

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 small onion, halved and sliced

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon dried

1/2 cup white wine or reduced-sodium chicken broth

1 pound green beans, trimmed

1 medium summer squash or zucchini, halved and cut into 1-inch pieces

1 cup halved cherry tomatoes or grape tomatoes

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

1/4 cup finely shredded Parmesan cheese



Cooking Instructions

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and oregano and cook, stirring, until softened and beginning to brown, about 2 minutes. Add wine (or broth) and bring to a boil. Add green beans, reduce heat to a simmer, cover and cook for 10 minutes, stirring once or twice. Add summer squash (or zucchini) and tomatoes and continue cooking until the vegetables are tender, 8 to 10 minutes more. Season with salt and pepper. Serve sprinkled with Parmesan.

Source: American Heart Association

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Recipes/Braised-Green-Beans-Summer-Vegetables_UCM_442568_Recipe.jsp