

TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS

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We are all bombarded with stressful events and situations everyday. Unfortunately, many of us are not so good at dealing with stress, and whether we realize it or not, stress can be impacting our health in a negative way.



Researchers estimate that stress contributes to as many as 80% of all major illnesses, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, skin disorders, metabolic disease, and infectious ailments of all kinds. Symptoms of stress may include but are not limited to: fatigue, dizziness, chronic headaches, irritability, depression, low self-esteem, changes in appetite, weight gain, digestive problems, breathing difficulties, chronic pain, insomnia, muscular weakness or tightness, and recurrent colds or infections.

Being able to effectively manage stress can have a significantly positive impact on overall health. Below are some useful tips that can help individuals manage their stress levels.

1. **Identify a common or persistent stressor.** Once this is done, one must then move to confront and resolve this stressor whenever possible. This is not always easy but is much more productive than letting ongoing stress affect your health indefinitely. There are certain stresses and situations that we simply cannot do anything about, so don't fret about things beyond your control.
2. **Exercise is one of the most powerful tools in helping one deal with stress.** Not only does it make you physically stronger, it also has the benefits of releasing excess tension, building self-esteem, boosting immune function, and stimulating the body's natural pain killing chemicals called endorphins.
3. **Fuel your body with a nutritionally balanced diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables, and low in trans-fat.** This will serve to tone down your body's negative response to stress. Significant and positive changes can also be made to your eating habits by cutting down serving sizes, eliminating unhealthy snacking, and minimizing foods that can be detrimental to your health.
4. **Eliminate bad habits.** Engaging in bad habits such as excessive alcoholic consumption, drug use, and smoking, only serve to amplify stress symptoms, regardless of how comforting some individuals might find these behaviors in times of stress.
5. **Getting enough sleep is crucial in letting your body recharge, refresh, and recuperate.** The average adult requires six to eight hours of restful sleep each night. As little as three days of sleep deprivation has been shown to significantly compromise productivity, create problems in relationships, and contribute to numerous health problems. Restful sleep keeps your body strong and is essential for helping cope with stressful situations.
6. **Find a good network of friends you can trust and rely on.** Talking to others in times of stress can be very comforting and therapeutic.



For additional information on diet, exercise, managing stress, and improving your health, visit www.nhwc.ca. From all of us at the New Hamburg Wellness Centre, Season's Greetings!

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