



How Stress Affects Our Health

August 2015

Stress is an ordinary mental and physical response to the ever-increasing demands of life.



Our bodies are designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can affect us physically, emotionally and mentally. If not managed well, stress can affect our health, vitality, peace-of-mind, and even our personal and professional relationships. Each of our body systems reacts to stress differently. Here are some examples:

Nervous system – When stressed, the heart rate increases, blood pressure rises, digestive changes take place, and your blood glucose may even increase.

Breathing – Stress can cause rapid breathing, which can bring on panic attacks in some people.

Heart – Acute or short-term stress such as being stuck in traffic may cause an increase in heart rate and stronger contractions of the heart muscle. Repeated episodes of stress can cause heart disease, which could lead to a heart attack.

Muscles – Muscle tension can cause headaches, migraines and various muscle conditions.

Hormones – The brain sends signals to the hypothalamus to release stress hormones.

Digestion – Stress can cause you to eat more or less than you usually do, which could cause heartburn or acid reflux. You may feel butterflies in your stomach, or even nausea or pain. Digestive issues such as diarrhea or constipation are also possible.

Reproductive Issues – For men, normal functioning can be affected under stress. If stress is ongoing, there can be impairment with testosterone and sperm production, or impotence. For women, stress can cause absent or irregular menstrual cycles and can reduce sexual desire.

What can you do to lower your stress and protect your health?

To reduce stress, you must first find the cause of your stress. Consider where your stress is coming from and how you notice it. People cope with stress in many different ways. Here are some helpful healthy habits you may want to try.

Organize: Give yourself more time. Being too busy is a big source of stress.

Prioritize: Decide what's most important and let go of the rest.

Exercise: Exercise helps your mind and body. Find an activity you enjoy, and start small. Even a little exercise helps a lot.

Verbalize: Sharing your problems with a friend, trusted family member, doctor or counselor has been proven to help reduce stress.

References: WebMd.com; Stress.org; APA.org

Outdoor Activities

Parks and Recreation

Summer is here! The kids are out of school, summer camps are underway, and there are many exercise opportunities near you in your local parks. Walking, jogging, swimming, bicycling and even weight-lifting facilities can be found near your home or workplace.



Walking – Walking is easy on your joints and, other than a pair of shoes, is free!

Walking for 30 minutes 5 days a week may ward off chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Many local parks have a walking track or trail, offering the added benefit of nice scenery. If you want to pick up the pace, you can try jogging or power walking.



Swimming – Swimming is an excellent way to tone your muscles and get a full-body workout with very little stress on your joints.

Swimming can increase your cardiovascular stamina and be a fun, refreshing way to exercise. Many

communities have a swimming pool where residents can swim. Just bring a swim suit and goggles and jump right in!



Bicycling – Cycling is an excellent option for cardiovascular fitness. With just a bicycle and helmet you can take advantage of the bike paths and scenery at the parks near you.



Weight lifting – Many cities have invested in adding outdoor gyms to their parks.

These free, easy to use machines are available in many parks and can be a great way to mix-up your exercise routine with some strength training.



A few words of caution -

It is important to pay attention to our body temperature and know the warning signs of heat illness. Nausea, weakness, headache, vomiting, and dizziness should be taken seriously. Make sure you and your family drink plenty of water, even if you are not thirsty. Wear light colored and loose clothing, seek shade, and stay inside if it is over 90 degrees. Be sure to speak with your doctor before starting new activities.

The bottom line is you can have low cost fun at a park near you!

Resources: WebMd.com



Ask the Health Coach

First-aid Supplies

Q: What items would I need for a well-stocked first-aid kit for my home?

A: A well-stocked first-aid kit will help you respond effectively to common injuries and emergencies. It is a good idea to give your kit a checkup every three to six months to replace used or expired supplies. Pre-made kits are available in stores, or you can make your own, using the suggested items below based on your family's needs.

Basic Supplies

- Aloe vera gel
- Antacids
- Antibiotic ointment
- Antidiarrheal medicine
- Antihistamine tablets or syrup
- Antiseptic ointment or wipes
- Band-Aids of different sizes
- Calamine lotion
- Cough medicine, cough drops
- Cotton-tipped swabs, cotton balls
- Elastic wrap and closures
- Emergency contact numbers such as Poison Control Hotline
- Eye wash solution
- First-aid instruction manual
- Hand sanitizer
- Hydrocortisone ointment
- Prescription medicine (such as asthma inhaler, Epi-pen, Insulin, nitroglycerin)
- Pain reducers (ex. Ibuprofen)
- Safety pins of various sizes
- Scissors
- Sterile gauze pads, a roll of gauze, and tape
- Sterile nonstick dressings
- Thermometer
- Tweezers
- Two pair of latex or other sterile gloves

References: WebMd.com; HealthyLife.com; RedCrossStore.com; ASPCA.org; FPICN.org

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Easy Whole-Wheat Pizza Dough

This homemade, yeasted whole-wheat pizza dough requires only one rising, not two, so it's quicker to make than you might suspect. This sturdy dough was developed for grilled pizzas, but it can be used in any pizza recipe calling for 1 pound of pizza dough. **Note:** *bread flour provides more gluten to help maintain its elasticity when shaped and baked. We also tested the recipe with all-purpose flour and had good results.*

Makes: 4 servings

Active total time: 25 minutes

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons lukewarm water, (105-115F°)
- 1 package (2 1/4 teaspoons) active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup whole-wheat flour
- 1 cup bread flour, or all-purpose flour, plus additional for dusting
- 2 tablespoons yellow cornmeal

Preparation:

1. Stir water, yeast, sugar and salt in a large bowl; let stand until the yeast has dissolved, about 5 minutes. Stir in whole-wheat flour, bread flour (or all-purpose flour) and cornmeal until the dough begins to come together.
2. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. (Alternatively, mix the dough in a food processor. Process until it forms a ball, then process for 1 minute to knead).
3. Place the dough in an oiled bowl and turn to coat. (To make individual pizzas, see Variation). Cover with a clean kitchen towel and set aside in a warm, draft-free place until doubled in size, about 1 hour. Individual variation: The dough can be turned into 4 or 6 personal-size pizzas. After kneading, divide the dough into 4 or 6 equal balls. Brush with oil and place 3 inches apart on a baking sheet. Cover and set aside until doubled in size, about 1 hour. Roll each portion into a 6-to-8-inch circle.

Make Ahead Tip: Prepare through Step 3, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to 1 day. Or tightly wrap the unrisen dough in oiled plastic wrap and freeze for up to 3 months. Defrost the dough in the refrigerator overnight. Let refrigerated (or previously frozen) dough stand at room temperature for 1 hour before using.

Nutrition: (Per pound) 970 calories; 5 g fat (1 g sat, 1 g mono); 0 mg cholesterol; 200 g carbohydrates; 36 g protein; 22 g fiber; 1152 mg sodium; 782 mg potassium.

Recipe courtesy of Eatingwell.com

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