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## Dealing with Stress

The body responds to stress by releasing stress hormones, which make blood pressure, heart rate, and blood sugar levels go up. Long-term stress can help cause a variety of health problems. Below are tips on how to handle and avoid stress.

### Attitude Check

- **Become a problem solver.**  
Make a list of the things that cause you stress and figure out which problems you can solve now and which are beyond your control. Calmly look at a problem, think of possible solutions, and take action to solve the problem. Being able to solve small problems will give you confidence to tackle the big ones, which will help you feel less stressed.
- **Be flexible.** Sometimes, it's not worth the stress to argue. Give in once in awhile or meet people halfway.
- **Get organized.** Think ahead about how you're going to spend your time. Write a to-do list. Figure out what's most important to do and do those things first.
- **Set limits.** When it comes to things like work and family, figure out what you can really do. There are only so many hours in the day. Don't be afraid to say NO to requests for your time and energy.

### Relax

- **Take deep breaths.** If you're feeling stressed, taking a few deep breaths makes you breathe slower and helps your muscles relax.
- **Stretch.** Stretching can also help relax your muscles and make you feel less tense.
- **Massage tense muscles.** Having someone massage the muscles in the back of your neck and upper back can help you feel less tense.
- **Take time to do something you want to do.** Listen to music, read a book, or go to a movie. Don't feel guilty taking time for you.



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### Take Care of Your Body

- **Get enough sleep.** Being well-rested helps you think better so you are prepared to handle problems as they come up. Most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night to feel rested.
- **Eat right.** Fuel up with fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains. Don't be fooled by the jolt you get from caffeine or high-sugar snack foods. Your energy will wear off and you could wind up feeling more tired than you did before.
- **Get moving.** Physical activity can not only help relax your tense muscles but improve your mood. Research shows that physical activity can help relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- **Don't deal with stress in unhealthy ways.** This includes drinking alcohol, using drugs, smoking, or overeating.

### Connect with Others

- **Share your stress.** Talking about your problems with friends or family members can help you feel better. They might also help you see your problems in a new way and suggest solutions that you hadn't thought of before.
- **Get help from a professional if you need it.** If you feel that you can no longer cope, talk to your doctor. She or he may suggest counseling to help you learn better ways to deal with stress. Your doctor may also prescribe medicines, such as antidepressants or sleep aids.
- **Help others.** Volunteering in your community can help you make new friends and feel better about yourself.



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