



Stress is a charge on the expense account of long-term health. In our fear-inducing world, this stress-debt has become a devastating health issue.(pathdoc/Shutterstock)

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Strategies for Managing Stress

Stress is a corrosive influence on your well-being and largely within your own control

BY [Ashley Turner](#) TIME [March 2, 2022](#)

Allostatic load—the sum total of all

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impact on the brain and body—takes a profound toll on our overall health and well-being. Stress sets off a biochemical shift in the body that gears it to fight or flight at the expense of rest, digestion, and restoration. Fortunately, there are practical strategies for reducing stress and the overall allostatic burden on our bodies.

Remember, stress isn't just in your head. It changes your entire physiology in a fundamental way. For that reason, don't take what follows as simple advice on living a healthier lifestyle, take it as a medical prerogative not unlike taking a medicine essential to staving off the debilitating effects of a disease.

Prioritize Quality Sleep

Sleep is the most important nutrient for the body. This is the time your body needs to rest and repair. In fact, not getting consistent quality sleep is associated with impaired immune function, cognitive decline, obesity, trouble managing weight, systemic inflammation, decreased mental health, and increased overall disease risk.

If you're waking up in the middle of the night and unable to fall back asleep, it might be caused by blood sugar dysregulation. When blood

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night, adrenaline is released by the body to compensate. This wakes you up and hinders your ability to fall back asleep.

Strategies for Achieving Restorative Sleep:

- Consider sleep an investment in yourself and your daily capability.
- Be mindful of your stress levels during the day. Functioning in a hyper-aroused state during the day doesn't foster quality peaceful sleep at night.
- Turn off screens about two hours before sleep.
- Consider wearing [blue-light-blocking glasses](#) two hours before sleep if you're exposed to artificial light in that time frame.
- Sleep in a completely dark environment. Use black-out curtains if needed.
- Don't allow electronics in your sleeping environment. These include cellphones, computers, TVs, LED alarm clocks, and so on.
- Turn off your Wi-Fi at night, as EMFs disrupt sleep and overall health.

Eat a Noninflammatory.

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Consuming nutrient-poor food causes inflammation and is an overall stressor to the body. Hyper-processed foods are cheap, easy, and mildly toxic. Food should be medicine. Real food gives the body what it needs to heal itself, fight off infections, and recover from injury. Finding the correct diet for your body is an important piece in managing allostatic load.

Tips for a Better Diet:

- Understand that your brain and body are created molecule by molecule from the food you eat.
- Identify and eliminate food sensitivities with your doctor.
- Identify and correct nutrient deficiencies.
- Avoid processed and refined food-like products that are generally found in the center aisles of the grocery store.
- Try to eat or shop from the [Environmental Working Group's list of Clean15 and Dirty Dozen produce lists](#) to avoid the highest levels of pesticides and herbicides.
- Avoid conventionally raised meats, eggs, and dairy products as they

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(chicken and pork have no added hormones), antibiotics, and other undesired components.

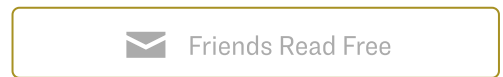
Exercise

Exercise releases feel-good neurotransmitters in the brain called endorphins. Endorphins act upon the opiate receptors in the brain and initiate a positive feeling in the body, therefore reducing stress.

Exercise, particularly high-intensity interval training (HIIT), also increases brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) within the brain. BDNF helps the brain develop new connections, repair failing brain cells, and protect healthy brain cells. Higher BDNF levels could be considered a natural antidepressant. Likewise, lower levels of BDNF are associated with depression, mood disorders, and neurocognitive decline.

When planning how to move your body for greater health, it's important to consider what you enjoy doing. Exercise can be fun, and should be! Do you thrive in a group setting? Do you enjoy being outdoors? Playing organized sports? Getting it done from home? The most important factor in a sustainable fitness program is that you adhere to it for long-term results. Fitness is a journey that must be viewed as a marathon.

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Some Inspiration for Physical Fitness:

- High-intensity interval training (HIIT)
- Strength training
- CrossFit
- Walking/jogging
- Dance and barre
- Hiking
- Yoga
- Taichi and qigong
- Intramural and recreational sports programs
- [Fitness Blender](#) is a great resource for free at-home workouts
- [One-Minute Workout](#) is a fantastic read online to understand the physiology of HIIT; and, of course, to get results in a short amount of time!

Reduce the Toxic Load

As discussed in our [previous article](#) on allostatic load, internal and external environmental toxins can contribute to stress and overall allostatic load.

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- Scrutinize personal care and household cleaning products.
- Drink clean water by using a Berkey water filter or other high-quality system.
- Consider filtering [shower](#) and [bath](#) water.
- Identify and clear infections such as candida, Lyme, mold, and viruses with a [functional medicine](#) practitioner.
- Determine and remove heavy metal exposures such as amalgam fillings, cigarette smoking, air and water pollution, cookware, medications, and so forth. Keep in mind that rice is a significant source of arsenic exposure. Consuming fish such as shark, swordfish, tilefish, and king mackerel can increase exposure to mercury.

Reduce the Stress You Can Control

While there's much in life that you can't control, there are areas where your actions can directly reduce or eliminate major contributors to your stress load.

Ways to Remove Stress:

- Say no. It's important to be
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TAKE ON COMMITMENTS YOU CAN'T
handle.

- Avoid people who stress you out. This may sound harsh, but limiting time with people who are takers and not givers may be helpful in reducing stress.
- Limit your exposure to news and social media. The reality is, we have a choice in what we are exposed to. Use news outlets and social media as a tool but avoid those that are not life-giving for you. Choose to silence the noise.
- Have realistic expectations of yourself. In preparation for the day ahead, plan out your top priorities; this can be done the night before or in the morning to start the day. Drop unimportant tasks to the bottom of the list. Better yet, cross them off entirely. The world will go on.

Mitigate the Impacts of Stress You Can't Control

There will inevitably be stressors you have no control over. Beyond managing your own reaction to those stressors, which is the most powerful step you can take, these additional measures can help.

- Take part in regular mindfulness

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mindfulness and prayer make us conscious or aware of something. While we believe practicing mindfulness and prayer should be a lifestyle, it can fall into the stress management category.

- Cultivate life-giving relationships and social support.
- Express gratitude for the gifts in your life. Gratitude radically shifts our physiology for the better. Focusing on the gifts we've been given calms the body, lowers inflammation, improves mood, benefits the heart, improves sleep, increases blood flow to the hypothalamus, optimizes dopamine levels in the brain, and rewires brain pathways toward positivity.
- Develop a sense of purpose. Identifying and acting upon what fuels you can have profound impacts on your stress levels and overall quality of life.
- Manage your time appropriately. Mismanagement of time is a significant contributor to increased stress.

Consider Supplementing with Adaptogenic Herbs

A class of herbs that helps the body

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maca, and Rhodiola are some of the adaptogenic herbs we use at our clinic. Generally speaking, these herbs help support proper circadian rhythm and cortisol levels, hypothalamic and pituitary function (HPA axis), and neurotransmitter regulation.

Sources

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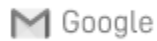
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