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Coping With Stress During Times of Change



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Coping With Stress During Times of Change

During times of change, many things happen to your body – emotionally and physically.

- Emotionally, there is the fear of the unknown, feeling of instability, and dealing with circumstances beyond your control.
- Physically, you may experience aches and pain, tiredness, and a change in your eating habits that affect your weight.



All of these things, and more, can put a dark cloud over your head, causing stress and even depression. After all, you may not feel like yourself and don't really know how to handle what life has thrown your way. That's why, at these times, there's a need to pay attention to your health — your emotional health.

Taking care of your mind is just as important as maintaining a healthy body. During times of change, emotional health issues such as stress (even depression) increase among individuals and damage their health. Both stress and depression can take years from your life because of what they do to your body. That's why it is so important to get help for any emotional health concerns you might have right now. Let's get a closer look at stress, its symptoms, and ways you can access assistance if you think you need help. Taking steps to reduce the effects of stress can help you live a healthier and happier life.

**For fast-acting relief
try slowing down.**

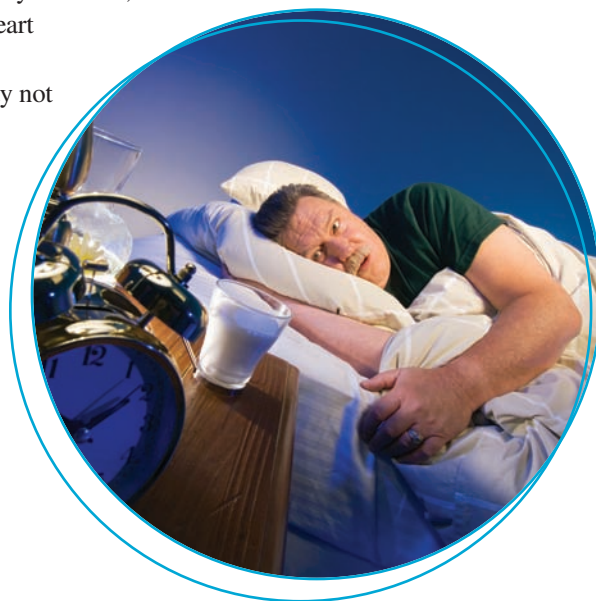
– Lily Tomlin



Symptoms of Stress

One of the reasons individuals don't get the proper treatment for stress (or depression) may be because they don't know the symptoms. In fact, there are many symptoms of stress — both emotional and physical. On the emotional side, stress can cause you to be irritable, worry constantly, and have trouble focusing. On the physical side, stress can result in increased blood pressure, heart palpitations, and weight changes. A person experiencing chronic body aches and pains may not know these symptoms are a result of (or exacerbated by) stress.

Here are some common symptoms and treatment options for stress. In addition to knowing the “emotional” warning signs, it's equally important to understand the health effects to your body. They can be another indicator that you need to seek out help.



Listen to your body. That headache may be telling you something.



	Symptoms	Health effects	Treatment
Chronic Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Restlessness • Worrying • Irritability • Anger • Feeling insecure • Lack of focus • Burnout • Forgetfulness • Change in weight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache • Back pain • Chest pain • Heart disease • Heart palpitations • High blood pressure • Decreased immunity • Stomach upset • Sleep problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity • Relaxation techniques like controlled breathing exercises • Meditation • Yoga • Tai Chi

Sources: National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health

EAP Help from OptumHealth

Gulfstreams' Employee Assistance Program (EAP), OptumHealth, is now more accessible than ever. OptumHealth can help you with any of your work/life concerns or questions. You and your family members are eligible to receive up to eight clinical visits per year at no cost to you. To access OptumHealth, call **1-866-743-6551** or visit **www.liveandworkwell.com** (access code 11060).

Tips for Managing Stress

Anyone with a pulse who has responsibilities usually has some form of stress. During times of change, stress levels increase because there is the anxiety and worry about the unknown. When you handle stress in the early stages, you are better equipped to cope with life's changes and challenges and are healthier as a result.

According to OptumHealth, three key things can help reduce the effects of stress:

1 Strive for a balance between work life and personal life: Work-life balance is essential for managing stress because it helps put nerve-racking problems in perspective. Make sure you leave time in your busy schedule to be around the comfort and support of family and friends. The more satisfying your personal life, the more productive you'll be at work.

2 Develop a positive, relaxed attitude: Having a positive outlook on life makes all the difference to your body when it comes to stress. If you constantly see the glass as half-empty, take things too seriously, or are easily wrapped up in unhealthy situations, think about taking a stress management course to improve your attitude.

3 Rely on a support network of co-workers, family and friends: Having a support network is key in dealing with stress. Sometimes, stressful situations are too much to handle on your own. When you're feeling stressed and need help, ask for it. Having a reliable co-worker, friend, or family member to talk to can alleviate your stress and help you work through the situation more productively.

Ask and You Shall Receive

It's usually easy to admit you have diabetes or suffer from asthma. But in our society today, people feel they need to be ashamed or embarrassed about emotional health issues and, therefore, deny them. On the contrary, stress and depression are not character flaws or an indication of emotional weakness. It's important to remember that these problems are very real and deserve the same medical attention and support as any other health problem.

One of the most important steps you can take if you have stress, or even depression, is ask for help. If you're uncomfortable confiding in a family member or friend to get advice, there are many other resources available and a few ways you can access it.

- **Contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** OptumHealth Behavioral Solutions by United Behavioral Health can help you deal with health and emotional issues. They can even refer you to professionals in your area. You and your family members receive up to eight clinical visits per year at no cost to you. To contact OptumHealth, call **1-866-743-6551**. You can also go online to www.liveandworkwell.com (access code 11060).
- **Make an appointment with your primary care doctor.** Primary care physicians can play an important role in diagnosing, treating, and referring patients to other professionals. You can make an appointment with your primary care doctor to discuss what makes sense for you.
- **Make an appointment with a professional, such as a Social Worker, Psychologist, or a Licensed Professional Counselor.** The best way to find a professional in your area (covered by your insurance plan) is to contact your health plan. You can also go to the **National Association of Social Workers' (NASW)** online directory of clinical social workers. Visit www.socialworkers.org and click on *Resources*.



If you need help,
ask for it. Don't
try to go it alone.



Physical exercise is a great way to reduce stress.

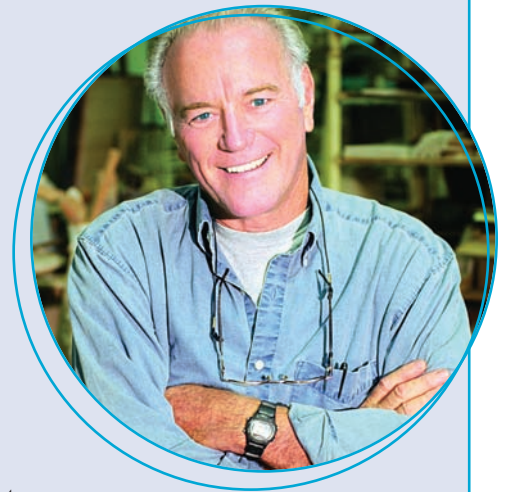
A Stress-Busting Exercise

When you hear the word “exercise,” you may envision going on a walk, jogging, or biking with a friend. You’d be right. Physical exercise is a great way to reduce stress. However, did you know you can also exercise your mind through meditation techniques and gain health benefits? It’s true. Both physical exercise and emotional exercise — meditation — are convenient and recognized stress-busters.

You don’t have to be a Guru to learn the art of meditation. Start out with a simple exercise like controlled breathing exercises. It’s one of the best ways to reduce stress because it slows down your nervous system, lowers your blood pressure, regulates your heartbeat, and improves your circulation. Below is an exercise of the mind you can do for 3 minutes or 30 minutes.

3-Minute Controlled Breathing Exercise:

1. Sit upright in a comfortable position.
2. Focus on your present state and existence (this is often termed being “mindful”). Block out intrusive thoughts. You may close your eyes if you wish.
3. Pay attention to your breathing. Inhale slowly through the nose, taking several seconds.
4. Exhale through the mouth, trying to make the exhalation phase last twice as long as the inhalation.
5. Continue this mindful breathing for 3-5 minutes.



You may increase your time and practice 15-20 minutes a day for added benefit. The more you practice, the better equipped your body will be to relax in stressful situations.

Source: Medicinet, Melissa Stoppler, M.D.

More Information

You can get more information on mental health by contacting your Employee Assistance Program at **1-866-743-6551** or by going online to the National Mental Health Association (NMHA) Web site at **www.nmha.org**. NMHA’s goal is to provide information and awareness to the public about mental health concerns.



“Partners 2 Health” is the companywide initiative for employees and their families to work together with Gulfstream to achieve a healthy life and reduce healthcare costs. Under this partnership, Gulfstream will supply the resources (medical plans and health-related information) and families will make informed decisions (taking into consideration that health guidance) to maintain or improve their health. In addition to substituting for the preposition “to” (“Acting as partners will lead to better health”), the “2” signifies the two partners (employees and Gulfstream) and the two phases (short-term and long-term) of everyone’s health. Additionally, the “2” represents the two goals of the initiative — the primary goal of better health and the secondary goal of lower healthcare costs.