



# CONNECTICUT Clearinghouse

A Program of Wheeler Clinic

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www.ctclearinghouse.org



A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

# STRESS

Stress is a natural part of life. Some stress is healthy. It can help us concentrate and achieve what we want. However, too much stress can cause physical, emotional, and behavioral problems. Too much stress can affect our health, energy, and peace-of-mind. Stress is connected to health problems like:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Sleeplessness
- Anxiety and depression
- Constant pain
- Problems eating and digesting food
- Illness
- Violence

## What Causes Stress?

Everybody handles stress differently. Major causes of stress include illness, job, life changes, relationship problems, deaths in the family, and financial difficulties. However, even happy events, like marriage, the arrival of a baby, or entertaining guests, can be stressful.

## Signs of Too Much Stress

Stress causes your body to increase its blood pressure, heart rate, breathing, and energy levels. When you are feeling stress your body releases a chemical called adrenaline. This prepares the body for action. Symptoms of too much stress include:

- Headaches
- Shoulder, neck, or back pain
- Poor concentration
- Frequent colds and flu
- Anxiety
- Stomach pain
- Difficulty sleeping
- Being tired all the time
- Clumsiness
- Crankiness
- Sudden sweating
- Skin rashes

These symptoms are your body's way of sending out warning signals. Don't ignore the signals. Your mental or physical health could get worse. Talk with a trusted friend or family member, a counselor, or health care provider and get help.

## Where to Get Help

Help may be as close as a friend or a spouse. If you think that you or someone you know has too much stress, talk with your doctor, clergy, or mental health professional. The resources below can provide more information on how you can manage stress or get professional help if you need it.

**Mental Health Association of Connecticut**  
220-30 Beaver Road  
Wethersfield, CT 06109  
(800) 842-1501  
www.mhact.org

**National Mental Health Association**  
1021 Prince Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
(800) 969-6642  
(800) 433-5959 (TTY)  
www.nmha.org

**The American Institute of Stress (AIS)**  
124 Park Avenue  
Yonkers, NY 10703  
(914) 963-1200  
(914) 965-6267 (Fax)  
www.stress.org

**American Psychological Association**  
750 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4242  
(800) 964-2000 (national referral line)  
www.apa.org



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## What You Can Do To Manage Stress

You can learn to manage stress in your life. Although we can't control what happens to us, we can learn how to control our reactions to stressful situations. There is no one way to manage stress. Different people manage stress differently. Below are some things you can learn to reduce and manage stress in your life.

**Be realistic.** Learn to say no! You may be taking on more than you can handle.

**Take one thing at a time.** Stress can make an ordinary workload seem unbearable. To cope with feeling overwhelmed, take on one task at a time. Pick one urgent task and work on it until it is completed. Then cross it off your list.

**Learn how to relax.** You can learn ways to relax that will help you cope with stress. Relaxation skills you can learn include deep breathing, exercise, stretching, clearing your mind, and meditation. Ten to twenty minutes of relaxation may bring relief from stress.

**Visualize.** You can use your imagination to practice what you would do to manage a stressful situation. Visual preparation can lift your confidence for coping with stress.

**Reward Yourself.** Take a break and do something you enjoy. Play recreational sports, take time to work at your favorite hobby, or listen to music. Rewarding your own efforts by doing something fun can help lower stress.

**Seek support.** Friends and family can be a great source of support. Talk with them about what is going on in your life. Just talking about what is happening can help you feel better.



## Exercise and Nutrition: Managing Stress

*A healthy lifestyle that includes physical activity, healthy eating habits, enough rest, and a balance between work and play can help reduce stress in your life.*

**Twenty to thirty minutes of physical activity can boost your body and spirit.**

Aerobic exercise, yoga, and recreational sports can help reduce stress because they:

- Help relieve anxiety
- Help you relax
- Help you feel better about yourself



**Good nutrition also makes a difference.**

A low-fat diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables can increase your strength and energy. Try to limit caffeine, alcohol, and sweets, which contribute to stress. Eating well can help protect your body during times of physical and emotional stress.



Information Provided by:  
Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health  
Wellness at Work