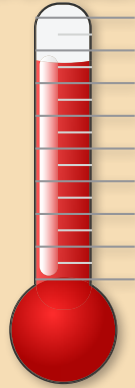


What you need to know and what you can do to manage it

How to Manage Stress?

At AltaMed, we want to make sure our patients have the tools and support they need to stay healthy and gain control of their health. This brochure is a tool to help you understand the types of stress there are and how they can impact your health. Our Health Education and Wellness team will work closely with you to help you manage your stress in order to lead a healthy lifestyle.

DANGER!



What is Stress?

Stress is a normal response to demands placed on your body (e.g., house chores, deadlines, bills, etc.). The body responds to all types of stress, good or bad, and can affect the way you feel, behave, or react on a normal basis.

Good Stress can help you focus and work faster. It is pleasant and healthy for your body. It improves the way you do things; it gives meaning and value, and is vital for physical and mental fitness. Good stress usually lasts a short time, gives your body energy, and sharpens the mind.

Bad Stress can be harmful. This type of stress can build up in the body over a long period of time and may lead to mental and physical problems. It is important to learn to manage and cope with bad stress.



How Stress Can Show Itself

Stress can show itself in different ways for each person. Below are some body signals that can give us a clue:

Physical Signs of Stress

- Blood pressure rises
- Heart beats faster
- Headache
- Feeling very tired
- Change in sleep patterns (e.g., sleeping too much or too little)
- Change in eating patterns (e.g., eating too much or too little)

Emotional Signs of Stress

- Crying
- Bad temper or feelings of anger
- Depression
- Desire to “run away”
- Lack of focus
- Feeling like you don’t want to do anything
- Feeling worried
- Forgetful
- Confused

Behavioral Signs of Stress

- Aggressive driving
- Smoking
- Increase use of alcohol or drugs
- Increase use of medications
- Biting fingernails and/or lips
- Feeling bored

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What you need to know and what you can do to manage it

Stress Coping Tactics

There are many ways you can learn to cope with stress. First, you can participate in activities you enjoy doing. These activities may take your mind off what is causing the stress and give you time to work out a result. Sometimes you need a distance from your problems to figure out how to better deal with them. Take a few minutes each day to “take a break” from life’s problems.

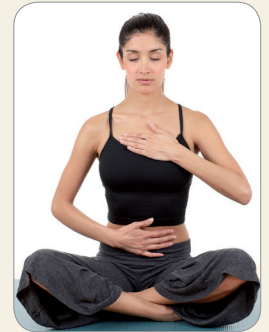
Three Stress Coping Tactics

1. Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a technique that you can do anywhere. It only takes 5 minutes. By breathing in deeply and bringing more oxygen into your body, tension is released.

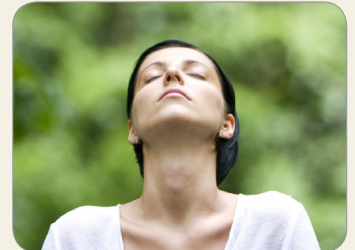
Inhale: Sit or stand (use good posture). Place one hand on your lower abdomen, the other on your chest. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose to fill your lungs. Your abdomen should expand outward and your hand should move out. Hold your breath for a few seconds before you exhale.

Exhale: Keep your hand on your lower abdomen. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Your hand and abdomen should return to starting position. Repeat 3 or 4 times.



2. Visualization

Create a feeling of deep relaxation by keeping your mind focused on a single peaceful word, thought, or image. Close your eyes and think of a peaceful place (real or made up). Begin the deep breathing technique. If your mind begins to wander, don’t give up, relax, breathe deeply, and refocus. Stretch and exhale as you finish this activity, which should take about 15 minutes.



3. Muscle Relaxation

Hands: Extend arms in front of you; clench your fists tightly for 5 seconds. Relax for 10 seconds.

Shoulders: Lift shoulders so that they are close to your ears. Hold position for 5 seconds. Relax for 10 seconds.

Legs and thighs: Sit up straight in a chair with feet on the floor. Slowly raise both legs until they become straight as a board. Lock your knees if you can. Point out your toes. Squeeze your legs and thigh muscles. Hold the position for 5 seconds. Relax for 10 seconds.



We are happy to be your partner in good health. We look forward to helping you succeed with your health care plan and manage your stress levels well.

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