

MIDDLESEX COUNTY OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

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STRESS REDUCTION TIP SHEET

As stress is different for everyone, no *one* stress reduction strategy will work for everyone. The best thing is to first identify the source of stress in your life. Avoid stress if possible, if not; reduce its impact by finding a strategy that works for you. Often, simple modifications in daily routines can help to prevent stress. These include getting the correct amount of sleep, eating properly, avoiding caffeine and other stimulants and simply taking time out to slow down and relax. Proper time management may also help to prevent an onslaught of stress induced symptoms.

COMMON SIGNS OF STRESS

- Frequent headaches, jaw clenching
- Gritting, grinding teeth
- Insomnia, nightmares, disturbing dreams
- Tremors, trembling of lips, hands
- Neck ache, back pain, muscle spasms
- Light headedness, faintness, dizziness
- Frequent blushing, sweating
- Cold or sweaty hands, feet
- Dry mouth, problems swallowing
- Frequent colds, infections, herpes sores
- Rashes, itching, hives, "goose bumps"
- Unexplained or frequent "allergy" attacks
- Heartburn, stomach pain, nausea
- Excess belching, flatulence
- Constipation, diarrhea, and/or Frequent urination
- Difficulty breathing, sighing
- Sudden attacks of panic
- Chest pain, palpitations
- Poor sexual desire or performance
- Excess anxiety, worry, guilt, nervousness
- Excessive defensiveness or suspiciousness
- Problems in communication, sharing
- Constant fatigue and/or weakness
- Frequent use of over-the-counter drugs
- Weight gain or loss without diet
- Increased smoking, alcohol/drug use
- Excessive gambling or impulse buying
- Feeling overloaded or overwhelmed
- Frequent crying spells or suicidal thoughts
- Feelings of loneliness or worthlessness
- Little interest in appearance, punctuality
- Nervous habits, fidgeting, feet tapping
- Increased frustration, irritability, edginess
- Overreaction to petty annoyances
- Increased number of minor accidents
- Obsessive or compulsive behavior
- Reduced work efficiency or productivity
- Lies or excuses to cover up poor work
- Rapid or mumbled speech
- Trouble learning new information
- Increased anger, frustration, hostility
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Forgetfulness, disorganization, confusion

STRESS REDUCTION STRATEGIES

- Manage your time well so as not to put extra demands on yourself
- Write things down and become more organized
- Exercise often – Walk, Jog, Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, Simple Stretching, Zumba
- Avoid social isolation – Talk with friends and spend time in social situations
- Take charge of your health and wellbeing
- Play with pets or children/grandchildren
- Distract yourself: seek out entertainment such as movies, games or books
- Listen to music
- LAUGH – Humor has an analgesic affect
- Practice deep breathing
- Engage in hobbies or projects
- Engage in meditation or prayer
- Practice visualization
- Volunteer your time
- Try Progressive Muscle Relaxation

WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT MANAGING STRESS?

- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/features/handlingstress/>