

# Stress Management



**Stress** is a state of physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Chronic stress can be harmful because it could lead to many chronic illnesses. Learning how to properly relieve chronic stress will help you restore balance to the mind and body and also has long term health benefits.

**Food** is not only a source of energy for the body, but it also provides the defense mechanism components to help regulate the body. The amount, frequency, and types of food you eat determine your body's response to stressful situations ◦

**Sleep** is crucial for repairing tissue and recovering our mental state. Lack of sleep raises stress hormones (cortisol) in our body which induces body ache, weight gain, gastrointestinal problems, etc.

- **Children (3-12 years old)** : 9-13 hours (*including naps*)
- **Teenagers (14-18 years old)** : 8-10 hours
- **Adults** : 7-9 hours
- **Older adults (65+)** : 7-8 hours

**20-minute naps are recommended for adults when needed.**

## Stress Reducing Foods



Asparagus



Fresh vegetable and fruit drinks



Dark Chocolate



Seeds/Nuts



Avocado



Blueberries

## Stress Inducing Foods



Caffeine



Spicy Food



Processed Foods



Fried Foods



Fast Foods



Refined Sugars



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**Exercise** releases endorphins (anti-stress hormones). Exercising for at least 30 minutes a day can augment weight and stress management.

## Example exercises

High energy activities (running, dancing, spinning)

- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Pilates (series of controlled movements)
- Martial arts, kickboxing
- Team sports (football, basketball, soccer)

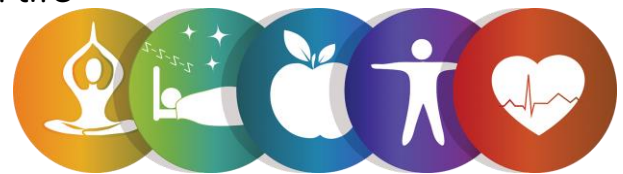


**Deep breathing** is a mindful technique to help you alleviate stress and normalize blood pressure. It is recommended to practice daily and throughout the day to maximize benefits.

1. Imagine yourself in a calm setting
2. Close your eyes, if possible
3. Breathe by engaging your abdominal muscles instead of breathing shallowly through your lungs
4. Inhale slowly as you count backwards from 4 to 0
5. Be in the moment as you exhale slowly and deeply as you count from 0 to 4
6. Practice 5-20 minutes at a time

## More Stress Management Tips

- Avoid using stimuli (TV, smartphone, computer, tablet device) one hour before bed
- Eat a protein-rich, balanced breakfast every morning
- Practice relaxation techniques (deep breathing, taking a hot shower/bath, massage yourself)
- Try going to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every day
- Plan ahead, and have alternative plans
- Learn to forgive, and appreciate the little things in life



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