

# Stress Management

**Have you been told to lower your stress, but are unsure how to start?**

Stress is a danger response that overtime can wreak havoc on your body. When your fight or flight response is triggered, the hypothalamus at the base of your brain reacts. It sends nerve and hormone signals to your adrenal glands, which release an abundance of hormones. These hormones are nature's way of preparing you to face danger and increase your chances of survival.

## PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS INCLUDE:

- Low energy.
- Headaches.
- Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation, and nausea.
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles.
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat.
- Insomnia.
- Frequent colds and infections.
- Loss of sexual desire and/or ability.

## HOW TO REDUCE STRESS WHEN STOPPING ISN'T AN OPTION

### 1. Eat healthily

There is a growing amount of evidence showing how food affects our mood and how eating healthily can improve this. You can protect your feelings of wellbeing by ensuring that your diet provides adequate amounts of brain nutrients such as essential vitamins and minerals, as well as water.

### 2. Be aware of smoking and drinking alcohol

Reduce or eliminate the amount you smoke and drink alcohol. Even though they may seem to reduce tension initially, this is misleading as they often make problems worse.

### 3. Exercise

Integrating physical exercise into your lifestyle as it can be very effective in relieving stress. Even just going out and getting some fresh air, and taking some light physical exercise, like going for a walk to the shops.

### 4. Take time out

Take time to relax. Strike the balance between responsibility to others and responsibility to yourself, this can really reduce stress levels. Tell yourself that it is okay to prioritize self-care

### 5. Be mindful

Mindfulness is a mind-body approach to life that helps us to relate differently to experiences. It involves paying attention to our thoughts and feelings in a way that increases our ability to manage difficult situations and make wise choices. Try to practice mindfulness regularly. Mindfulness meditation can be practiced anywhere at any time.

### 6. Get some restful sleep

Having a regular nightly routine to get ready to sleep as well as prioritizing bed times and wake times will help you get the sleep you need.

### 7. Don't be too hard on yourself

Try to keep things in perspective. Remember that having a bad day is a universal human experience. When your inner critic or an outer critic finds faults, try and find truth and exception to what is being said. If you stumble or feel you have failed, don't beat yourself up. Act as if you were your own best friend be kind and supportive. Take a few minutes each day to appreciate yourself!

**MEMBERS: As always, your provider is just a phone call or text message away. It's better to be safe than sorry. Reach out if you are worried or if this protocol isn't helping.**