

STRESS & WEIGHT LOSS



STRESS & WEIGHT LOSS

- Stress is an unavoidable part of our daily lives.
- A certain amount of stress is actually necessary for our survival; however, the amount of stress most people are under these days is causing more harm than good and can have serious health implications.
- *43% of all adults suffer adverse health effects due to stress.*
- *75%-90% of all medical visits are in some way related to stress.*

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- Stress greatly impacts one's health; it speeds up the aging process and leaves us feeling fatigued and demotivated.
- Not only is stress correlated with weight gain and the inability to lose weight, but it is also linked to a wide variety of diseases including:
 - Cardiovascular disease
 - Diabetes
 - Osteoporosis
 - Gastrointestinal disorders
 - Obesity
 - Cancer
 - Anxiety & Depression

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- Stress, no matter where it is coming from, disrupts your body's internal balance, known as homeostasis.
- There are two different categories of stress: acute (short term) and chronic (long term).
- Acute stress occurs when, for example, you have to slam on the breaks in the car, someone scares you or you are running late.
- Chronic stress is long lasting and is linked to serious side effects.

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- Examples of chronic stress are: taking care of a sick parent, feeling unhappy in your home life, enduring a long illness or a drawn out divorce.
- No matter what type of stress you are under, your body reacts by activating the “General Adaptation Syndrome,” which is responsible for returning your body to a state of homeostasis, or internal balance.

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General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS):

- You experience an external stress, either physical or emotional;
- An internal alarm goes off signaling a “flight or fight” response in your brain;
- In reaction to the “flight or fight” response, your autonomic nervous system (ANS) involuntarily secretes two hormones, adrenaline and cortisol, that are required to help maintain homeostasis.

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- When you feel stressed, your brain is affected.
- Your ANS cannot tell the difference between physical and emotional stress, therefore, it reacts the same.
- The GAS response to stress is immediate if there is a physical threat; however, most of the time the source of stress is not originating from a physical threat and there is no real need for “flight or fight.”
- Stress is related to weight gain because in order to fight or flee you need energy.

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- Cortisol is responsible for helping you to receive the energy you need, primarily by increasing your blood sugar.
- This is accomplished by converting protein to sugar, then releasing stored glucose in your liver.
- This is also why people crave carbohydrates when they feel stressed.
- The brain sends a signal indicating that energy is needed in order to fight or to flee.

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- When blood sugar levels are elevated, insulin (the fat storing hormone) is secreted in order to transport the blood sugar to the brain and working muscles.
- Here is the catch: the muscles aren't working because there is no physical stress, only emotional.
- People are usually sitting and not moving for long periods of time when feeling stressed.
- Can you guess what happens?

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- The excess sugar you just secreted and ate in the form of carbohydrates gets stored as fat.
- When you are chronically stressed, this cycle continues to repeat itself.
- A larger problem arises when the “General Adaptation Syndrome” is not able to shut off.
- This creates feelings of exhaustion, flu-like symptoms and disease.
- When one experiences periods of prolonged and intense stress, and one feels unable to relax, these symptoms may result.

What Can I Do to Decrease Stress in My Life?

1. Diaphragmatic Breathing

4-Part Breath

- Inhale deeply through your nose so the breath moves down past your clavicle and chest before expanding your rib cage and into your stomach;
- Your stomach should expand upon inhalation and chest should not move in or out;
- Starting from your stomach, exhale slowly through your nose, with control, up through your chest, clavicles and out the nose;
- As you exhale, pull your belly button toward your spine to diffuse the stale air from your lungs;
- Inhale for a count of four seconds, hold for two seconds and exhale for another count of four;
- Repeat until you feel relaxed.

What Can I Do to Decrease Stress in My Life?

2. Progressive Relaxation

- Lie on your back with palms facing up by your side, let toes fall open to either side;
- Individually contract different muscle groups for a few seconds, then release;
- Remind yourself to relax each muscle group and release any tension that is being held.



What Can I Do to Decrease Stress in My Life?

3. Meditation

- Various techniques to choose from;
- Join a meditation group;
- Purchase an informational book or video.

4. Yoga

- Beneficial for many reasons other than stress reduction;
- Join a class based on your level;
- Purchase a book or video;
- Strengthens the body and the mind, teaches you how to breathe

What Can I Do to Decrease Stress in My Life?

6. Exercise

- Uses the sugar secreted in your “flight or fight” response;
- Helps maintain cortisol balance;
- Allows for more “me” time;
- Can be a social activity.

7. Nutrition

- Drink plenty of water, reduce or eliminate caffeinated beverages;
- Avoid eating sugary, high GI carbohydrates and processed foods;
- Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.