

Like clockwork

from Dr. Laura Corio, M.D.

Women's Health Issues

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DESTRESS FOR SUCCESS

If you are reading this newsletter and thinking about the thousand other things you need to do, then I don't have to explain to you what stress is all about. With our crazy busy lives, the impossible demands placed upon us and the constant distractions of technology buzzing all around us -- who doesn't feel stressed out these days? Well, relax. Take a deep breath. Read. Here are some facts about stress and a tip or two on how to deal with it.

Common Stress Triggers

Believe it or not, stress is not a person, place or thing – it is *your reaction* to a person, place or thing. This is why some people want to rip their hair out when they get stuck in a traffic jam while others stay mellow. Your genes, personality and life experiences all influence the way you respond to stress. Situations and events that are distressing for most people may simply roll off your back or you may be hypersensitive. Some stress triggers are obvious — job loss, divorce, illness, the economy. But relentless daily hassles like an unreasonable boss or getting the kids off to school on time can also send your stress levels into the stratosphere. In the long run, those small, persistent stressors can wear you down more than the sudden, devastating events do.

Signs of Stress

Constant feelings of anxiety, moodiness, anger or depression are sure indicators you're feeling stressed. Insomnia that drags on for more than a week is not only a symptom of stress, it may also be a contributor. Other signs include out of character emotional outbursts, big changes in appetite or sex drive, chronic fatigue and more frequent colds. If you find yourself constantly saying or thinking things like, "I can't keep my mind on my work," or "I feel miserable and I don't know why," or, if you blow little things out of proportion like when your husband makes a minor mistake or one of the kids slams the door a little too hard – these are pretty good clues that life is getting to you and it's time to address the problem.

Taking A Toll

Humans evolved the ability to respond to stressful situations by preparing the body for "fight or flight." When under stress, the body pumps out stress hormones to give you a burst of strength and endurance. These days, you're more apt to be chased by a bill collector than a Saber Tooth Tiger so the flood of stress hormones can be harmful to your physical health. In fact, some experts estimate that a full two thirds of doctor's visits can traced to the effects of stress. Stress is often the root cause for everything from digestive problems to chronic headaches to crazy menstrual cycles to addiction. One recent Rockefeller University study even demonstrated how stress may actually create long term changes to the brain; even short bouts of stress lead to significant decreases in memory and an inability to manage emotions.

What To Do

Regular exercise is an opportunity to manage the fight or flight response by decreasing stress hormones and increasing feel good hormones. Taking your issues out on the tennis court or a punching bag can also provide an outlet for negative emotions while improving self esteem and boosting your energy level. Ditto for a good diet that limits grease, salt, sugar and all of the other junk that does nothing good for your body or mind. If you're having a really tough time, keep a stress journal, talk to people you trust and seek professional help. Talk to me. I'll help you figure out what you need and get back on track.



Stress takes a toll

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Dr. Corio's Resources

For more information about how to deal with stress:

- Stress Tutorial
www.nlm.nih.gov
- Techniques for Stress Reduction
www.mindtools.com
- Coping with Stress
www.mayoclinic.com

PEARLS

The Question: Does meditation really help reduce stress?

The Research: Absolutely! The research on meditation and its ability to reduce stress is abundant and clear. Practicing meditation on a regular basis can reduce symptoms of depression, increase focus and even make you feel more compassionate towards other people thus making it less likely others will rub you the wrong way. Meditation appears to be an especially useful technique for dealing with stress brought on by life's constant interruptions -- technology, e-mail, cell phones, too much information! Emory University researchers found that regular meditators are able to calm their brain waves and refocus their attention far more quickly after a series of short interruptions than those who don't practice meditation.

Dr. Corio Says: You don't need to become a Buddhist monk to reap the benefits of meditation. Stopping once or twice a day to close your eyes and take a few deep breaths is a good start. Taking a noncompetitive yoga class that focuses on breathing and easing muscle tension is another good step. Some gyms and yoga studios offer meditation classes but if you need something even more convenient, check out iTunes for some excellent (and free) meditation podcasts.

The Question: I've read that eating chocolate can help reduce stress. Please tell me it's true!

The Research: The theory that chocolate can make you happy dates back to the Aztec Indians and actually has some scientific basis. Studies show chocolate increases levels of serotonin, a brain chemical known to have an antidepressant effect. It's packed with substances called unsaturated N-acylthanoamines which are known for bringing on feelings of euphoria and relaxation. Unsweetened and dark chocolate -- and to a lesser extent milk and white chocolate -- also contain theobromine which stimulates the brain and acts as a mood elevator but may also be responsible for that feeling of choco-holic addiction.

Dr. Corio Says: While I certainly wouldn't recommend scarfing down an entire Easter basket full of chocolate bunnies, a few squares of chocolate can help chase away the blues. You can find many of the same feel good chemicals in foods such as tea, vegetables and nuts minus the sugar, fat and calories but a little nibble every now and then isn't such a bad thing and may indeed lift your spirits.

Sources: articlesbase.com, Mayoclinic.com, Uptodate.com and Science Daily

Doctor & Office Hours

Doctor's Hours

Monday	12:00 PM-6:00 PM
Tuesday	9:00 AM-3:00 PM
Wednesday	9:30 AM-2:30 PM
Thursday	8:00 AM-2:00 PM

Office Hours

Monday	10:00 AM-5:00 PM
Tuesday – Friday	9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Make an Appointment

Call 646-422-0730 during our normal office hours.



News Flash

Though you won't get much sympathy from your out-of-work friends, a new study has found that getting a promotion is bad for your health. University of Warwick researchers in England say that climbing the corporate ladder increases stress and worry by about 10 percent but diminishes the chances you'll visit a doctor by as much as 20 percent. It's long been thought that the higher your rank at work, the better your health but this latest study turns that conventional wisdom on its ear. In fact, people are significantly healthier before they achieved loftier job status and it is their robust health that seems to contribute toward getting promoted in the first place. In looking at more than 1000 job promotions over the course of a decade, researchers found that those who joined management were healthier to start than those who remained in the trenches but after achieving a promotion, they experienced more mental health issues and took less time to deal with them.