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April is Stress Awareness Month

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OVERVIEW

If you're feeling severely stressed and/or thinking about hurting yourself, call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

STRESS is the body's response to any kind of demand or pressure, good or bad. Stress is a natural human reaction that happens to everyone. In fact, your body is designed to experience stress and react to it. When you experience changes or challenges (stressors), your body produces physical and mental responses.

Stress responses help your body adjust to new situations. Stress can be positive – keeping you alert, motivated and ready to avoid danger. For example, if you have an important test coming up, a stress response might help your body work harder and stay awake longer. But stress becomes a problem when stressors continue without relief or periods of relaxation.*

Types of stress. There are three main kinds of stress: acute, episodic acute, and chronic.

1. Acute stress: Acute stress is short-term stress that comes and goes quickly. It can be positive or negative. It's the feeling you get when you're riding on a rollercoaster or having a fight with your spouse. Everyone experiences acute stress from time to time.
2. Episodic acute stress: Episodic acute stress is when you experience acute stress on a regular basis. With this kind of stress, you don't ever get the time you need to return to a calm, relaxed state. Episodic stress frequently affects people working in certain professions, like emergency room doctors and nurses.
3. Chronic stress: Chronic stress is long-term stress that goes on for weeks or months. You may experience chronic stress due to marriage troubles, issues at work, financial problems, healthcare, staying safe, discrimination, bereavement, divorce and climate change. It's important to find ways to manage chronic stress because it can lead to health issues.**

While stress is a normal part of daily living, knowledge and self-awareness can help you recognize when stress is creeping in so you can manage it in the way that brings you balance. Unmanaged stress can affect every aspect of your health - emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically.* People with high levels of chronic stress are more likely to die of various causes, including of heart disease and stroke. Chronic stress is also linked to anxiety disorders and major depression.

*Caraday Healthcare.. <https://www.caradayhealth.com/relax-its-national-stress-awareness-month/>

**Comprehensive Physiotherapy Service. Physiotherapy Matters. March 23, 2023.

<https://www.physiotherapymatters.co.uk/blog/april-is-stress-awareness-month/>

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF STRESS*

Physical Symptoms:

- Aches & pains
- Chest pain or heart palpitations
- Exhaustion or trouble sleeping
- Headaches, dizziness, shaking
- Sweating
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Shallow breathing/hyperventilating
- Muscle tension, jaw clenching
- Stomach or digestive problems
- Nausea
- Trouble having sex
- Weakened immune system

Psychological Symptoms:

- Anxiety or irritability
- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Thoughts of suicide
- Sadness

Behavioral Symptoms:

- Alcohol disorders
- Gambling disorder
- Overeating or other eating disorders
- Participating compulsively in sex, shopping or internet browsing
- Smoking
- Substance use disorders

COMPLICATIONS OF STRESS**

Chronic stress can lead to many long-term health issues affecting your:

- Immune system (like arthritis, fibromyalgia and psoriasis).
- Digestive system (like weight gain or loss, ulcers and irritable bowel syndrome).
- Cardiovascular system (like high blood pressure, increased heart rate and heart palpitations).
- Reproductive system (like infections, polycystic ovarian syndrome and infertility).

*<https://www.physiotherapymatters.co.uk/blog/april-is-stress-awareness-month/>

**Cleveland Clinic . <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/11874-stress>

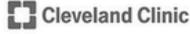
Stress

Physical symptoms of stress may include:

 Exhaustion.	 Headaches, dizziness or shaking.	 High blood pressure.
 Digestive problems.	 Chest pain.	 Muscle tension.
 Aches and pains.	 Sexual dysfunction.	 Weakened immune system.

Stress can lead to emotional and mental symptoms like:

 Anxiety or irritability.	 Depression.
 Panic attacks.	 Sadness.

 Cleveland Clinic

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DIAGNOSIS (diagnostic tests)

To assess stress, healthcare professionals may use various diagnostic tests including :

1. Physiological Measurements:

- Blood Pressure and Heart Rate: These assess your physiological response to stress.
- Heart Rate Variability (HRV): Provides insights into the autonomic nervous system's response to stress.
- Electrocardiogram (ECG): An ECG records the electrical activity of the heart and can help identify any changes in heart rhythm or function that may be related to stress.
- Respiration Rate: Changes in breathing patterns can also be an indicator of stress.

2. Psychological Questionnaires:

- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): Measures how uncontrollable and overloaded a person feels life to be.
- State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI): Assesses temporary anxiety and general tendency to be anxious.

3. Blood Tests:

- Cortisol Test: Cortisol, also known as the "stress hormone," is measured in blood, urine, or saliva to assess adrenal gland function and identify potential imbalances related to stress.
- White Blood Count (WBC) and C-Reactive Protein (CRP): Provide insights into the immune system's response to stress, since stress can lead to inflammation and immune system dysregulation.

4. Stress Tests:

- Exercise Stress Test: This test can help identify any abnormalities in heart function or blood flow.
- Stress Echocardiogram: Combines a stress test with an ultrasound to assess heart function and blood flow during stress.
- Nuclear Stress Test: Creates images of heart during stress; helps identify coronary artery blockage.
- Cardiac MRI Stress Test: Uses magnetic resonance imaging to create detailed images of the heart during stress and can assess blood flow and identify any damage to the heart tissue.
- Pharmacologic Stress Test: Uses medication to simulate the effects of exercise on the heart.

POPULAR VITAMINS, SUPPLEMENTS, ETC. USED TO SUPPORT STRESS



These are some of the top stress-supporting supplements:

- **Ashwagandha:** Ashwagandha has long been a common go-to ingredient for stress, concentration, and energy support. One downside of some ashwagandha supplements is that they have poor absorption support. These typically have a higher serving size and may need to be taken throughout the day. Look for ashwagandha supplements containing "sustained-release" ashwagandha. This means that the compounds are released over an extended period of time.
- **Rhodiola Rosea:** Rhodiola rosea is an supplement that may support stress resistance. It may also be able to help with symptoms related to burnout, support mood, motivation, and mental fatigue.
- **L-Theanine:** L-theanine is an amino acid, found in green and black tea, that may help support calm by reducing stress chemicals and supporting serotonin.
- **B Vitamins:** Vitamins B1, B6, B9, and B12 are important for healthy brain function. They may help support mental clarity, cellular energy, focus, energy production, and brain fog.
- **Valerian Root:** Valerian root is an herb that has been used to promote feelings of calmness by supporting GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid) brain levels that may support mood and calm.*

*Smarter Choices. Primal Harvest. March 16, 2025. [https://: conmpare.smarter-choices.com](https://conmpare.smarter-choices.com)

THE ROLE OF CHIROPRACTIC CARE IN TREATING STRESS

One of the primary benefits of chiropractic care is its ability to relieve chronic pain, a common physical response to stress. When the body experiences stress, muscles tend to tighten, potentially causing spinal misalignments that lead to discomfort and pain. Chiropractic adjustments help realign the spine, alleviate pressure on the nerves, and provide much-needed pain relief.

As muscle tension eases and the body relaxes, beneficial hormones such as oxytocin and cortisol are released, fostering a sense of well-being and reducing overall stress levels. Additionally, since the nervous system regulates the function of cells, organs, and bodily systems, any disruption in nerve signaling can weaken the immune system, making it harder for the body to fight infections. Stress can exacerbate these disruptions, increasing susceptibility to illness. Chiropractic adjustments help restore proper nerve flow, strengthening immune function and promoting overall health.

Beyond pain relief, chiropractic care plays a vital role in stress management by reducing the physical symptoms of stress, encouraging relaxation, and supporting immune health. To maximize the benefits of chiropractic care, consider integrating it into a comprehensive stress management plan that includes regular exercise, a balanced diet, mindfulness practices, and professional counseling or therapy.*

Chiropractic physicians provide relief through techniques that may include:

Spinal Adjustments:

- Chiropractors use spinal adjustments to correct misalignments, which can reduce pressure on nerves and alleviate tension in the body.
- Chiropractic care can help restore balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, reducing the physiological effects of stress.
- Adjustments can also promote relaxation, which is crucial for managing stress.

Muscle Tension Relief:

- Chronic stress can cause muscles to tighten, leading to discomfort and pain.
- Chiropractors can use massage therapy and other techniques to relax muscles and release tension, which can help reduce stress and promote a sense of calm.

Nerve Function and Immune System:

- The nervous system plays a crucial role in the body's response to stress, and any disruption in nerve signals can impact overall health.
- Chiropractic care aims to ensure that nerve signals flow freely, which can help boost the immune system and improve overall well-being.

Holistic Approach:

- Chiropractors take a holistic approach to stress management considering the mind-body connection.
- They may recommend lifestyle modifications, such as stress reduction techniques, exercise, nutrition, and sleep techniques to support overall well-being.

Complementary Therapies:

- In addition to spinal adjustments and massage, chiropractors may recommend other complementary therapies, such as acupuncture or relaxation techniques, to help manage stress and anxiety.

Benefits Beyond Pain Relief:

- Chiropractic care offers advantages that extend beyond alleviating pain by reducing physical symptoms of stress, promoting relaxation, and enhancing the immune system.



*Genesis Medical Associates, Inc. <https://www.genesismedical.org/blog/how-chiropractic-care-can-help-you-manage-your-stress>

MANAGING STRESS

You can't avoid stress, but you can stop it from becoming overwhelming by practicing these daily strategies:

- Try getting some form of physical activity when you feel symptoms of stress coming on.
- At the end of each day, take a moment to think about what you've accomplished — not what you didn't.
- Set goals for your day, week and month. This can help you feel more in control.
- Consider talking to a therapist or a healthcare provider about your worries.

OUTLOOK/PROGNOSIS

How long does stress last? Stress can be a short-term issue or a long-term problem, depending on what changes in your life. Regularly using stress management techniques can help you avoid most physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms of stress.

WHEN SHOULD YOU TALK TO A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER ABOUT STRESS?

What questions to ask your healthcare provider? Questions you may want to ask your provider include:

- What symptoms of stress should I be concerned about?
- How can I manage my stress better?
- What stress management techniques do you think I should try?
- Do you have a therapist or support group you'd recommend?



You should seek medical attention if:

- You feel overwhelmed.
- Your physical health is affected.
- Symptoms of stress aren't going away with stress relief techniques.
- You're using recreational drugs or alcohol to cope.

Your primary care provider can help by offering advice, prescribing medicine or referring you to a mental health professional, like a psychologist or psychiatrist.****

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEEK MEDICAL HELP?

If you're thinking about hurting yourself or you're in immediate distress, call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. This service provides 24-hour, confidential support to anyone in the United States experiencing emotional distress or a suicidal crisis.

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****National Library of Medicine.

https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7250516/#:~:text=Areas%20of%20unanimous%20or%20general%20agreement%20*,we llbeing%2C%20higher%20energy%20levels%20and%20psychological%20reinforcement.