

What is Stress?

Stress is your body's response to a real or perceived threat. The stress response is meant to get you ready for action to get you out of danger; however, most of the threats we face in modern times are not something that you can fight or run away from. They are usually problems that you have to work through.

Some stress can be a good thing. It can motivate you to focus on a task or take action and solve a problem. In this situation, stress is manageable and even helpful.

When stress is unhelpful, you may feel overwhelmed or feel like you can't fix the problem. You may avoid dealing with the original problem altogether, which can make the problem as well as the stress, worse. It can become difficult to concentrate, make decisions, and feel confident when you experience a lot of stress. You may begin to experience physical symptoms like sweating, a racing heart, or tense muscles. Over time, stress may also impact your physical health. You may have trouble sleeping, headaches or become sick more often.

Common sources of stress may include major life changes, like moving or beginning a new job. Long-term worries, like a long-term illness or parenting, can

also feel stressful. Even daily events like traffic can be a source of stress.

What Can I Do About It?

Taking action is the first step to dealing with stress, don't ignore it. There is no one right way to deal with stress but below are some tips that you may find helpful.

- Understand what you are stressed about. Is your job, school, a relationship with someone, or worries about money causing stress? Once you understand the problem you can do something about it.
- Look for possible solutions that help change or lessen the problem. Once you've decided on a solution, divide it into smaller steps and work on one step at a time. Using your problem-solving skills can help you feel like you're in control again.
- Share your feelings of stress with people around you. Once they understand, they may be able to help support you. If you need to talk with someone outside your own circle of family and friends, your family doctor may be able to refer you to a counsellor.
- If you are stressed by money and debt issues, you can access the support of the Credit Counselling Society.

- Stress can happen when you have too many tasks or duties. Try to look for ways to make your to-do list more manageable.
- Find ways to relax. Consider trying yoga, meditation, mindfulness, or breathing exercises to help quiet your mind. This will help you look at problems from a calmer, more balanced point of view and allow you to be more creative in your problem solving.
- Physical activity can be a great way to reduce stress and improve your mood. Activity could be anything from going for a walk to taking up a new sport.
- Make time for hobbies, sports, or activities that you find fun or make you laugh. This can temporarily give you a break from problems.

Can I prevent stress?

Stress is part of being human, it is impossible to avoid completely. The goal is to manage your stress. All of the above strategies can help you take control of stress so it doesn't control you in the future. If you find it hard to manage the stress in your life, be sure to talk to your family doctor.

Help for stress...

Canadian Mental Health Association:
Edmonton » <http://edmonton.cmha.ca/>

Health Canada » www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Credit Counselling Society
10612 - 124 Street
(780) 701-0083

Shambhala Centre
10110 - 124 Street NW (back of building)
www.edmonton.shambhala.org

Meditation instruction on Tuesday nights from
7-9 pm