



Working TOWARD Wellness

LIVE BETTER. LIVE LONGER.

PROVIDED BY HEART HEALTH ACTION WINDSOR-ESSEX
AND THE WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH UNIT

STRESS BUSTERS!

You hear a lot about stress today, but what is it really, and what can you do about it?

Stress is the body's natural response to the ever-changing environment and situations that you experience. Some people thrive on stress while others find that it interferes with their ability to concentrate on tasks.

So how does stress come about? Stress happens when your regular coping skills and resources are not enough to deal with the pressures from challenging situations. Stress can happen because of an incident while driving to work (often called "Road Rage"), a coworkers' nasty comment, an unrealistic workload, or an argument with a family member. Stress can also happen because of pressures you put on yourself, such as goals that are too hard for you to meet.

Know that stress is all around you and impossible to avoid, but life without it would be dull and boring! Stress not only challenges you everyday, everywhere, but it adds flavour and opportunity to your life.

What can you do about high stress? Make the stressors in your life work for you, instead of against you. Set time aside daily for you to recharge your energy and strengthen coping skills you already have. By dealing with stress, you can live a healthy life at work and home.

Remember, stress does not go away, but using stress busters can lower stress to manageable levels.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

- | | T | F |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Nearly 50% of Canadian adults over 30 are frequently stressed. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Prioritizing tasks will NOT help you cope with stress. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. It's OK to have some stress in our life. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Stress can lead to unhealthy habits such as smoking, overeating and inactivity. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. It's a good idea to get professional help if stress becomes too great. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Stress management programs usually include ways to eat healthy, sleep better and get physically active. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Yoga, meditation, reading a book or watching a movie can help reduce stress. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Consuming alcohol is a good way to help manage stress. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Workplace stress is the most common source of stress. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Employers can help workers deal with stress by providing programs on financial planning and conflict resolution. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

see answers on back panel

Managing Your Stress Makes Good Sense

Managing stress can help you lead a healthy and productive life that includes:

- Healthy eating
- Regular physical activity
- Smoke-free living
- Better sleep
- More time relaxing
- Better sense of humour
- Less anxiety, headaches and depression
- Stronger immune system to fight infections
- Higher self-esteem
- Better morale
- Increased productivity at work and in your personal life
- Stronger relationships with others at work and at home

Why SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED ABOUT STRESS IN YOUR LIFE?

Many studies have shown that nearly 1 in 2 Canadians over 30 years of age reported being stressed on a frequent basis, and that workplace stress was the most common source. Stress can affect your mental, emotional and physical health, and over a long period of time it can seriously affect your overall health.

Stress can lead to, or reinforce, unhealthy lifestyle choices such as

smoking, overeating (especially high fat, high calorie foods) and physical inactivity, which are risk factors for health problems like heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

Research shows that it is okay to have some stress in your life. Stress provides you with energy to meet challenges at home and work. It helps you “rise to the occasion” to meet your goals with enthusiasm and strength. On the

other hand, too much stress can turn your feelings of challenge and delight into exhaustion and despair. The good news is that you can learn to manage stress to help you perform your daily tasks well.

Focusing on the positive sources of stress in your life and minimizing or dealing with the negative sources can go a long way toward keeping a healthy body and a healthy attitude.

How CAN YOU DEAL

Get Started

First, it is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of prolonged and excessive stress in your life. If you are experiencing any of the following, take time to consider whether or not stress is a factor that may be contributing to these conditions. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Headaches or migraines
- Grinding teeth or clenched jaw
- Chest pain/racing heart
- Muscle aches
- Upset stomach
- Constipation/diarrhea
- High blood pressure
- Backaches
- Tiredness or trouble sleeping
- Frequent illnesses
- Sadness or depression
- Anger, anxiety, or defensiveness
- Helplessness
- Severe mood swings
- Lack of appetite or binge eating

- Slow decision making
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs or cigarettes
- Poor hygiene
- Isolation from others

Take Steps

Once you have identified that you are suffering from excessive stress, try to identify what may be the cause. Some common stressors include: money issues, work and family demands, children, care of older/disabled family members, health problems, fatigue, family/co-worker fights, lack of supervisory support or work control, conflicting tasks, and shift work.

When the stress you experience exceeds your ability to cope, try to focus on dealing with your stressors. Choose to deal with things that are within your control and talk to someone about the ones that aren't.

Remember that the goal is to reduce stress

to manageable levels, not to completely eliminate it.

It is also helpful to learn ways to help prevent and cope better with excessive stress when it does occur.

There are 5 basic types of coping skills: mental, social, physical, diversional and spiritual. You will notice as you go through this list that some skills overlap.

- Prioritize tasks.
- Know your limits and learn how to say “no”.
- Take breaks during your work day and, if possible, get away from your workstation for your lunch break.
- Include stretch breaks throughout the day, whether you are at work or at home.
- Be open and honest with your co-workers, family and friends.
- Praise a co-worker for help and a job done well.
- Be physically active everyday.

What ARE THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING STRESS?

Finding a balance between “paid work” and personal or family lives has become a significant issue for both women and men. One of the biggest challenges is finding the time to deal with this feeling of being overloaded with both job and family responsibilities. How often is time for relaxation or other stress management activities put on the back burner to focus on work responsibilities or family members?

The key is to *begin taking steps* to deal with excessive stress in your life. Taking the time now is an investment in your overall health.

W I T H S T R E S S ?

- Take several deep breaths daily.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Get regular sleep and rest.
- Co-operate with others.
- Make time for more fun and humour in your life.
- Get involved in activities/groups/volunteering.
- Find more ways to relax (yoga, meditation, reading books, etc.).
- Avoid alcohol or drugs (they only relieve stress temporarily).
- Talk to someone who cares about you.
- Seek professional help if stress becomes too great.

Stick To It

Forget about always winning; focus on relaxing, staying healthy and enjoying what life has to offer.

- Adopt a healthy lifestyle to help prevent and deal with stress.
- Know that all stressful events are not

the same, and that you may have to try different ways to handle different types of situations.

- Take a stress management course.
- Remember to get regular checkups from your health care provider to prevent ill health.
- Seek help from your doctor, the Canadian Mental Health Association or your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if you feel that your stress level is still too high to deal with on your own.

Celebrate!

Reward yourself for coping with stress well! Buy tickets for an event you want to attend, book a massage, shop for something that you've been saving money for, or invite friends over for dinner. Remember that a positive attitude is linked to good physical and mental health.

Go for it!

RESOURCES

Canadian Mental Health Association
255-7440

Sandwich Community Health Centre
258-6002

Windsor and Essex public libraries
255-6770 (Windsor)
776-5241 (Essex County)

Your family doctor

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

WEBSITES

General Information

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety
www.ccohs.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association
www.cmha.ca

Canadian Health Network
www.canadian-health-network.ca

Heart & Stroke Foundation
www.heartandstroke.ca
(search site for “stress”)

Self-administered Stress Tests

Canadian Mental Health Association
www.cmha.ca/english/info_centre/
(see “CMHA stress test” under coping with stress)

Family Counselling Centre of Brant
www.familycounsellingcentre.brant.com
(click on “stress”)

www.wehealthunit.org and at
www.windsor-heart-health.com

CLIP & KEEP THIS INFO!

Tips to Help You Prevent, Reduce and Cope with Stress

- Eat a healthy balanced diet.
- Be physically active everyday.
- Get enough rest and sleep.
- Know your limits.
- Prioritize tasks and talk to your co-workers or family about potential problems.
- Have fun at work and home.
- Get yourself involved in things and learn to relax!
- Avoid temporary stress relievers such as alcohol, drugs or medication.
- Share your feelings, worries and success about stressful times or events with someone.
- Recognize triggers and symptoms of stress in your life.
- Seek professional help if you see signs of prolonged stress symptoms in yourself or others.

Pass it on!

Please feel free to copy any articles in this brochure as long as you acknowledge the source.

Make it happen at your workplace!

Employees Can:

- List your stress triggers and ways to deal with them on a daily basis.
- Take stretch breaks and meal/snack breaks throughout your workday.
- Prioritize tasks and discuss them with your supervisor so that you both have clear expectations of the job.
- Share ideas and resources that help you relax with your co-workers (tapes, books, music, etc.).

Employers Can:

- Arrange for classes on financial planning, conflict resolution, physical activity, nutrition, work-life balance, communication strategies and other stress management issues.
- Provide a system of employee recognition for work that is well done.
- Create a forum in which workplace stressors can be addressed by both management and employees.
- Consider the possibility of offering flexible work hours or work at home arrangements.
- Learn more about best advice for Stress Risk Management at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/ahi/workplace/pdf/stress_risk_management_1.pdf and www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/ahi/workplace/pdf/stress_risk_management_2.pdf

"The reason why worry kills more people than hard work is that more people worry than work."

Robert Frost

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Answers (from front page): 1:T, 2:F, 3:T, 4:T, 5:T, 6:T, 7:T, 8:F, 9:T, 10:T.

For more information about the Workplace Health Promotion Program, contact the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 258-2146 x 3100



This brochure and others in this series available online at:
www.wehealthunit.org and at www.windsor-heart-health.com