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Simple strategies to combat stress

Just about everyone experiences stressful situations. Sometimes a measure of stress can provide motivation to do one’s best or strive for an especially lofty goal. However, when stress becomes a chronic condition, it can adversely affect individuals’ quality of life and even their overall health.

Harvard Medical School says stress can manifest itself in myriad ways. Stress can cause tension headaches, indigestion, aches and pains, or even heart palpitations, and it may affect the mind by making it hard to concentrate or make decisions. Many people experience stress through emotional or psychological symptoms, such as irritability or feeling down. Learning how to effectively manage stress is essential for individuals’ overall well-being.

Exercise regularly
Exercise serves many functions, including acting as a potent stress relief strategy. The Cleveland Clinic says aerobic exercise releases endorphins, which are natural substances that help a person feel better and maintain a positive attitude. Movement activities like yoga or Tai Chi also can relax the mind and body and promote physical health.

Take media breaks
Overwhelming oneself with a barrage of negative news stories or constant information can increase stress levels. Individuals can strive to remain informed and still build breaks into their schedules. Shut off news programs, turn over the newspaper or tune out of social media from time to time. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals who are stressed out by world events reduce the number of times they read the news or check the headlines each day.

Meditate or perform breathing exercises
Breathing and meditation can help alleviate stress, according to the American Heart Association. A quick meditation can provide some perspective. If a situation is stressful, go for a walk or take a few slow, deep breaths until the body relaxes. Harvard Medical School also says meditation can induce a relaxation response, which is an antidote to stress.

Change negatives to positives
Negative self-talk may increase stress, but positive self-talk can help a person calm down. Individuals should practice positive self-talk every day. Instead of saying, “I hate when this happens,” say, “I know how to deal with this, I’ve done it before.”

A small amount of periodic stress can be a good thing. However, chronic stress poses a significant threat to individuals’ long-term health.
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How different vitamins affect the body

At the dawn of a new year, it’s not uncommon for people to take inventory of their personal health and strive to make positive changes. Being more conscientious of the foods they put into their bodies is a start, but some individuals may wonder if supplementation can help them go one step further.

Nutrition Insight reports that 77 percent of American adults consume dietary supplements, and Nutraceuticals World indicates 98 percent of adult supplement users are taking vitamins and minerals. Individuals considering supplements should always discuss them with their physicians prior to including them in their health regimens. Even those who haven’t considered supplements can discuss them with their physicians, as Harvard Health, MedlinePlus and the U.S. National Library of Medicine note that various products can provide some significant benefits.

- Vitamin A (retinoids/carotene): Beta carotene can be converted into vitamin A as needed. It plays an important role in vision, keeps tissues and skin healthy, and also is involved with bone growth.
- Vitamin B1 (thiamin): Helps convert food into energy, and is essential for brain health and nerve function.
- Vitamin B2 (riboflavin): This works with other B vitamins by promoting growth and the production of red blood cells.
- Vitamin B3 (niacin): Helps convert food into energy. It’s also essential for healthy skin, blood cells, brain, and nervous system function.
- Vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid): Helps make lipids, neurotransmitters, steroid hormones, and hemoglobin in the body.
- Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine): This vitamin may reduce the risk of heart disease by helping to lower homocysteine levels. It also helps convert tryptophan into niacin and serotonin, a mood-regulating neurotransmitter.
- Vitamin B9 (folate): Vital for new cell creation, it helps prevent brain and spine birth defects when taken early in pregnancy. It also may lower risk for colon cancer risk.
- Vitamin B12 (cobalamin): Vitamin B12 is important for metabolism and energy production. It also helps form red blood cells and maintain the central nervous system.
- Biotin: Biotin helps to metabolize proteins and carbohydrates. It also promotes healthy bones and hair.
- Vitamin C (ascorbic acid): This is an important antioxidant that promotes healthy teeth and gums. It also helps the body absorb iron and maintains healthy tissue by promoting wound healing. Vitamin C may help boost the immune system to help with illness prevention or recovery.
- Vitamin D (calciferol): Also known as the “sunshine vitamin,” vitamin D is made in the body after individuals spend time in the sun. It is hard to get enough vitamin D from food sources alone. Vitamin D also helps the body absorb calcium, which is vital for healthy bones and teeth.
- Vitamin E (tocopherol): An antioxidant that helps the body form red blood cells and use vitamin K. Scientists also are studying a potential relationship between vitamin E and a lower risk for Alzheimer’s disease.
- Vitamin K (menadione): Vitamin K activates proteins and calcium essential to blood clotting. It also may help prevent hip fractures.

In addition to these vitamins, the body needs various minerals, including calcium, iron, copper, iodine, magnesium, and more. Speak with a doctor or nutritionist to learn more about supplementation. HM221600
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