

7 Ways to Reduce Stress and Improve Your Health

Have you been feeling more stressed lately? You are not alone. During this challenging time, many people are feeling more stressed than usual. Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the demands of life. It's your body's way of preparing you to face a new challenge by making your heart beat faster, quickening your breathing and tightening your muscles so you stay alert. If you want to manage your stress better, try the following tips collected from sources including the Mayo Clinic, Harvard Medical School and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

1. **Exercise daily.** Aerobic exercise such as biking, dancing, brisk walking, jogging or hiking is especially effective at reducing stress and improving your mood. When you do these activities, your body releases mood-boosting chemicals called endorphins, while reducing levels of stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol.
2. **Practice mindfulness.** Learning to focus on your breathing can take your mind off your worries and help reduce stress.
3. **Take a break from the news.** Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. Limit yourself to enough news reporting to stay informed, but not enough to heighten your anxiety.
4. **Eat well.** During stressful times, it's tempting to fill up on high-fat comfort foods or salty or sweet snacks, but these foods can sap your energy and make you feel weighed down. Instead, try to consume nutrient-dense snacks and meals, such as fruits and vegetables, nuts, broiled or baked chicken or fish, and whole-grain bread, rice or pasta. These foods can give you a sustained energy boost and help you stay healthy.
5. **Don't resort to bad habits.** Turning to alcohol, drugs or smoking to deal with stress are counteractive; they will only make you feel worse and could lead to serious health problems. Instead, seek out constructive ways to cope by talking to others about your feelings (perhaps in a virtual visit with a behavioral health expert), getting enough sleep, listening to your favorite music, or doing something nice for yourself.
6. **Keep a journal.** Write down your thoughts in a journal to help you process events and information. Such reflection can give you a fresh perspective on a stressful situation.
7. **Help others.** Taking care of your friends, family and/or neighbors can help you feel connected, give you an emotional boost, and help make your community stronger. Preparing healthy meals for your family, contributing to a food bank, doing yardwork for a neighbor, sewing masks for others are just a few examples of ways to make a difference.

For more information and resources about managing stress, please turn over this page.

Resources for Managing Stress

Websites:



LifeResources Employee Assistance Program: Access stress management webinars, articles and videos! Click on the LifeResources button on HealthTrust's Secure Enrollee Portal, or visit www.mylifeexpert.com and enter the username – healthtrust – and password – resources.



LiveHealth Online: If you are covered by a HealthTrust medical plan (other than Medcomp Three), you can visit with a behavioral health expert by appointment without leaving your home. Learn more and register today at www.livehealthonline.com so you are ready when you need it!



[The American Institute of Stress](http://www.theamericaninstituteofstress.org)



[Mayo Clinic](http://www.mayoclinic.org)



[American Heart Association](http://www.heart.org)



[American Psychological Association](http://www.apa.org)

Articles:

Cleveland Clinic: [Stress Management and Emotional Health](#)

CDC: [Stress and Coping during COVID-19](#)

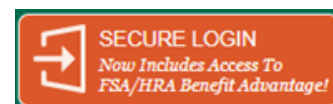
Harvard Medical School: [Eating during COVID-19: Improve Your Mood and Lower Stress](#)

Harvard Medical School: [Exercising to Relax](#)

Harvard Medical School: [Best Ways to Manage Stress](#)

Mayo Clinic: [4 A's of Stress Relief](#)

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 - Onlife Health – Check your journey dollars, sign up for challenges, do healthy activities.
 - LifeResources – EAP resources and COVID-19 support.
- Newsletters, notifications, forms, program brochures and information.

Disclaimer: This content is intended to be informational and does not constitute professional health advice or an endorsement of the resources mentioned.