



## Are You Stressed?

This test can help you determine whether stress is something you should discuss with your health care provider. Circle the appropriate response next to each statement and add up your total in each column.

	Yes	No	
I've recently experienced the loss of a loved one, job, relationship or material wealth.	10	0	
I've recently had a major change in my life (e.g., job, moving, marriage or birth of a child).	10	0	
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely /Never
I smoke, drink or overeat.	10	5	0
I skimp on sleep.	10	5	0
I tend to be sedentary (little or no exercise).	10	5	0
I get worked up over traffic jams and other events beyond my control.	10	5	0
I tend to lose my temper.	10	5	0
I tend to take on more than I can handle.	10	5	0
I feel that everything I do must be perfect.	10	5	0
I tend to see the glass half-empty.	10	5	0

### How did you do?

If you scored **0-25 points**, you're probably doing a good job of controlling stress. Keep it up!

If you scored **30-50 points**, you're at medium risk. Discuss it with your provider during your next visit.

If you scored **55-75 points**, you're at medium-high risk. Schedule some time soon to discuss stress management with your provider.

If you scored **80-100 points**, you may be considered at high risk for stress-related problems and should speak with a health care professional without delay.



## Stress Dos and Don'ts

- ✓ **DO learn how to relax.** Relaxation can reduce blood pressure and muscle tension, slow your breathing, and increase blood flow to major muscles.
- ✗ **DON'T leave stress unchecked.** An over-active stress response can raise your risk for life-limiting conditions such as obesity, heart disease and depression.
- ✓ **DO remember that you can't save time,** but you can manage it well.
- ✗ **DON'T mask stress** symptoms with drugs, alcohol or medications.
- ✓ **DO modify expectations of yourself** during times of stress or stressful events.
- ✗ **DON'T be afraid to get help** from family, friends or professionals.
- ✓ **DO learn to prioritize.** Some things can wait another day.
- ✗ **DON'T underestimate the power of self-care.** Take time out from daily stresses by participating in group sports, social events or hobbies. If none of these ideas appeal to you, try taking a class in something you enjoy.

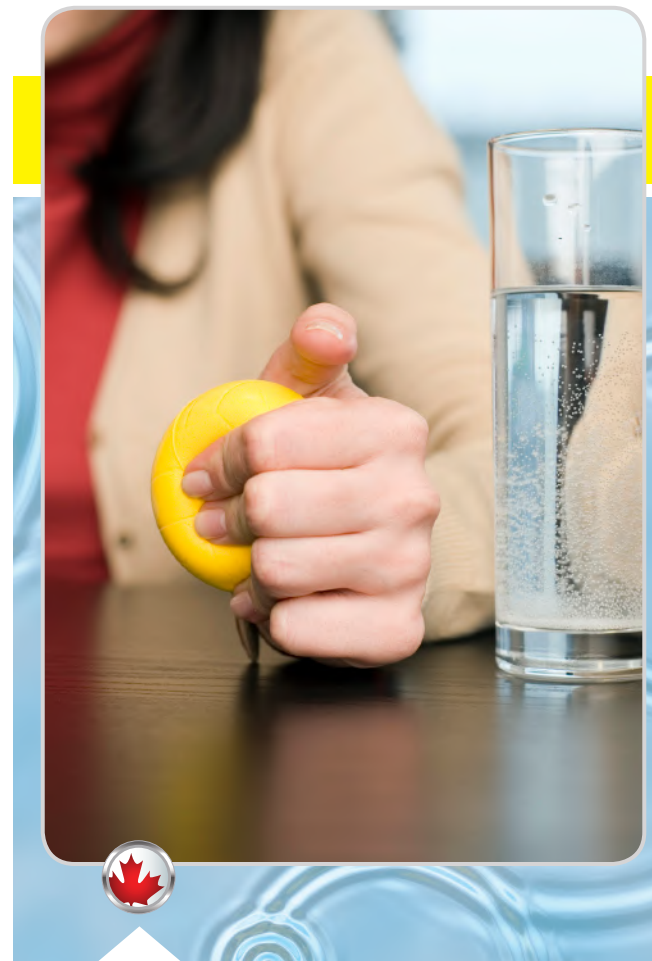


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# Real-World Stress Relief



Slowing Down Without Letting Up



## What Is Stress?

Stress is your body's response to change. There are two main types: acute stress, which occurs in response to a specific event, such as a fender bender or an argument; and chronic stress, which usually results from unrelenting pressures such as financial problems or overwhelming responsibilities.

## What Causes Stress?

Your body reacts to threats with the fight-or-flight response. This releases stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenalin into the bloodstream, giving the body extra strength (to fight) or stamina (to flee).

The fight-or-flight reaction is also known as the stress response. Over time, this constant state of being at red alert can leave you feeling stressed or burned out, and may cause a host of health problems.

## What Can I Do About Stress?

Whether stress affects you negatively or positively is often determined by how you react to a situation. You can learn to control your reactions to prevent stress from taking over. Advice on how to do this generally falls into one of three categories:

- 1 **Take good care of yourself.** A healthy body makes you more resilient to life's curveballs.
- 2 **Adjust your attitude.** How you perceive situations affects how stressed you feel.
- 3 **Get help when you need it.** Many effective ways to manage stress are available.



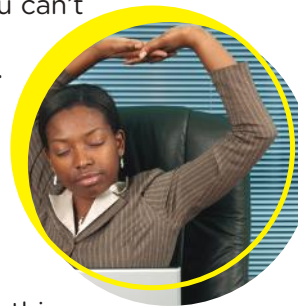
## Take Care of Yourself

- **Limit** alcohol, don't overeat and don't smoke. Each makes your body more prone to stress.
- **Exercise** regularly. Going for a walk, a bike ride or a run helps boost the activity of mood-enhancing brain chemicals and can trigger the release of your body's natural stress fighters.
- **Eat** a healthy diet that is low in animal fats and high in whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- **Get** at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep to feel fully rested.
- **Practice** a daily relaxation technique such as deep breathing (in through the nose, out through the mouth), progressive muscle relaxation (tightening, then relaxing muscles from head to toe), or autogenic relaxation (calmly repeating a word such as *quiet* over and over).



## Adjust Your Attitude

- **Don't** fret over things you can't control, such as the weather, traffic conditions or the past.
- **Set** realistic goals at home and at work. Unreasonably ambitious goals create needless tension.
- **Learn** to say *no*. No one can do everything.
- **See** change as a welcome challenge, not a threat. Use your unique talents to make change occur smoothly.
- **Prepare** for events that you know may be stressful, such as a presentation. Visualize doing it successfully.
- **Try** recording all the things that went right each day, to see that good fortune is also a part of your life.



## Be Here Now

Some stress experts say that learning to live in the present can go a long way toward combating stress. The only time you can change is the present. Work to change that.



## Get Help When You Need It

- **Talk** out your problems with family or friends. Don't keep them bottled up.
- **Resolve** conflicts at work by discussing the problems with a supervisor or employee assistance counsellor.
- **Join** a self-help group, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous or Nicotine Anonymous, to battle unhealthy addictions.
- **Triumph** over excessive worry with the help of a counsellor or therapist. Cognitive behavioural therapy, also known as talk therapy, can help worrywarts change their negative perceptions.
- **Consider** biofeedback, which uses a special machine that monitors physiological changes, such as temperature and heart rate, to retrain your responses to stimuli. Learn more at [www.bcia.org](http://www.bcia.org).
- **Check** whether your health plan, employee assistance plan or health care provider can recommend a counsellor or therapist who can help.

