Stress Awareness
Health Education Program

Learning to relax

How does stress affect my body and my health?

Everyone has stress. Sometimes we have short-term stress, the kind that hits us when we get lost while driving or when we miss the bus. Even everyday events, such as planning a meal or making time for errands, can be stressful. This kind of stress can make us feel worried or anxious.

Other times, we face long-term stress, such as racial discrimination, a life-threatening illness, or divorce. These stressful events also affect your health on many levels. Long-term stress is real and can increase your risk for some health problems, like depression.

Both short- and long-term stress can have effects on your body. Research is starting to show the serious effects of stress on our bodies. Stress triggers changes in our bodies and makes us more likely to get sick. It can worsen problems we already have. It can also play a part in the following problems:

- trouble sleeping
- headaches
- constipation
- diarrhea
- irritability
- lack of energy
- lack of concentration
- eating too much or not at all
- anger
- sadness
- tension
- stomach cramping
- stomach bloating

- skin problems, like hives
- depression
- anxiety
- weight gain or loss
- heart problems
- high blood pressure
- irritable bowel syndrome
- diabetes
- neck and/or back pain
- reduced sexual desire
- difficulty getting pregnant
- higher risk of asthma and arthritis flare-ups

If you think stress is causing you any of the problems listed above, make an appointment to see your doctor. He or she can provide suggestions to reduce or manage your stress and keep you as healthy as possible.

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