



Stress Reduction

Everyone feels stress sometimes. It is one way that our bodies react to changes in our environment. Stress can be positive when it helps us deal with problems and challenges. The effects of stress become negative when the stress doesn't end. Over a long time, too much stress can raise your risk for chronic diseases.

What Causes Stress?

- Too much to do and not enough time
- Lots of little problems in the same day (like a traffic jam or running late)
- Having an argument
- Death of a loved one
- Chronic illness
- Problems at work
- Money problems
- Not knowing what the future will bring



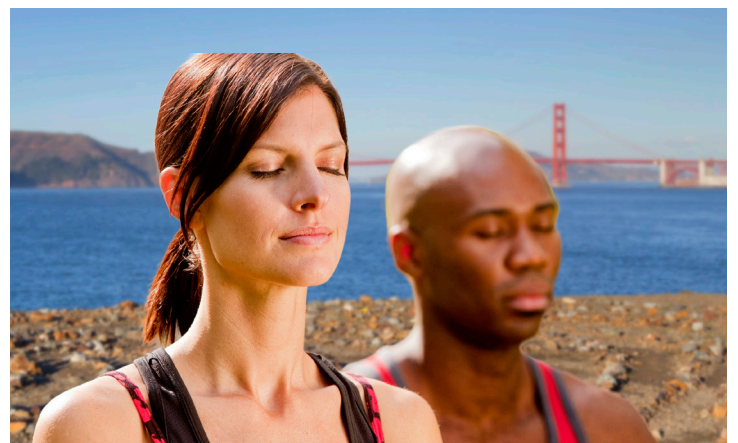
What Does Stress Feel Like?

Stress can make people feel:

- Worried
- Angry or irritable
- Sad or depressed
- Unable to focus or concentrate
- Confused

Some physical symptoms of stress:

- Headaches
- Tense muscles
- Shaky hands
- Feeling very tired
- Insomnia
- Heartburn
- Upset stomach





How Should I Cope with Stress?

Below are some tips to help you manage and prevent negative stress in your life:

Take care of yourself

- Avoid drugs and alcohol. In the long run they create additional problems that can make stress worse.
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
- Make exercise a part of your daily life. Walk, dance, garden, play with your kids, or do some other activity you enjoy.
- Get plenty of sleep – most people need 7-8 hours per night.
- Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out.

Try to be positive

- Turning negative thoughts into positive ones can help you calm down. Instead of saying “I can’t do this,” say “I’ll do the best I can.” Practice positive self-talk every day.
- Do things you enjoy to make you feel good. Try it at least once a day, even if it is only for 15 minutes. Here are some ideas: listen to music, play a game, do an art project, take a walk with a friend.
- Put things in perspective. Think about the things in your life that you are grateful for. Try to let go of things you cannot change.

Practice relaxation

- In a stressful moment:
 - o Take 5 slow, deep breaths to calm yourself down.
 - o Count to 10 before you speak.
 - o Relax your muscles. Try stretching or taking a hot shower.



- o Break down problems into smaller parts. Prioritize the most important things first.
- Make relaxation part of your daily routine:
 - o Try yoga, tai chi, or meditation.
 - o Do deep breathing exercises at home. Sit quietly with your eyes closed. Picture yourself in a peaceful place. Hold the scene in your mind while you inhale and exhale. Continue to breathe slowly for 5-10 minutes.

Get help if you need it

- Reach out to your friends and family. It helps to talk, and to have someone listen.
- Many smartphone apps have tools to help you deal with anxiety and stress. Try Self-Help for Anxiety Management (SAM) for free for iPhone or Android.
- If your stress symptoms don’t go away or get worse over time, talk to your primary care provider.
- Medi-Cal members can contact Beacon Health Strategies **1(855) 371-8117** for a list of providers that can help manage stress. Or contact SFHP’s Customer Service at **1(415) 547-7800** for resources and information.

Sources:

“Managing Stress” The Patient Education Institute, National Library of Medicine, www.nlm.nih.gov

“Stress at Work” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov

“Manage Stress” National Health Information Center, www.healthfinder.gov

For more information call Customer Service at **1(415) 547-7800** or visit www.sfhp.org
Free 24/7 Nurse Help Line 1(877) 977-3397