

News Release From:
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Managing Stress

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There are many factors that can cause stress in a person's life. Although some stress may be a good thing (as in, "I work better with a deadline"), too much stress can wreak havoc on one's physical well-being. There are some strategies that can help reduce stress.

Stress happens when a person faces a real or perceived harmful situation. It may be brought on by a physical source, such as an injury or surgery. Mental stressors can include problems at work or in one's personal life. It may be feeling the pressure to get just the right gift for everyone on the list, having a more-than-full schedule during the holidays (or anytime of the year), traffic, deadlines or extra work on the job or managing the care of multiple generations.

Too much of this 'fight or flight' situation can lead to physiological changes that are detrimental. Prolonged stress increases the secretion of a hormone called cortisol that raises blood pressure and causes fluid retention. Stress raises blood glucose levels in people with diabetes. It can also affect the immune, musculoskeletal, digestive, nervous and respiratory systems.

Some stress may be easier to reduce. For example, if traffic causes stress on a regular basis, a different time or route could be taken to avoid the congestion. For other stressors, it may be harder to reduce or prevent the stress, but there are options. Daily physical activity can help. It can be as simple as taking ten to twenty minutes to walk, do active household chores, stretch at a desk chair or other worksite, or make a snowman. Have fun with it. Find other ways to relax during those most stressful times, such as engaging in a hobby or using a relaxation technique like progressive relaxation or breathing exercises. Create realistic expectations and go easy. Prioritize, determine what is most important and take the rest off the to-do list. When possible, plan ahead so there are not so many activities on the to-do list in the first place. Laugh – it can help release the tension of stress. Choose a healthy eating plan to keep the body in good shape. Try to get enough sleep and to maintain a positive attitude.

Stress happens, but making deliberate choices can help reduce it to a more manageable level.

For more information on stress management, or any other topic, contact me, Janet Hackert, at 660-425-6434 or HackertJ@missouri.edu or your local [University of Missouri Extension office](#). University of Missouri Extension - your one-stop source for practical education on almost anything.

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