**What is stress?**

You probably have a good idea of what it means to be stressed out, but what exactly is stress? It’s our body’s way of responding to changing or demanding circumstances.

**Managing stress**

Stress is a natural reaction to the challenges and demands of life, but you can take an active role in managing how stress affects you.

**Not all stress is negative.**

Stress in moderate amounts can be motivating and help you take on new challenges. Stress becomes harmful when the symptoms you develop from it outweigh the benefits you receive.
MANAGING STRESS

Take an active role in reducing and preventing stress

MANAGE YOUR STRESS

Stress is a part of life and everyone handles it differently. It’s impossible to eliminate stress but you can learn how to manage it better.

SOME COMMON SIGNS OF STRESS OVERLOAD

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL</th>
<th>BEHAVIORAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>headache &amp; muscle tension</td>
<td>anxiety or worry</td>
<td>overeating or undereating</td>
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<tr>
<td>fatigue &amp; sleep problems</td>
<td>hopelessness</td>
<td>alcohol or other abuse</td>
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<td>change in sex drive</td>
<td>low motivation or focus</td>
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<td>stomach aches</td>
<td>irritability or anger</td>
<td>social withdrawal</td>
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<tr>
<td>frequent illnesses</td>
<td>sadness or depression</td>
<td>self-criticism</td>
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Take breaks from stressful situations

TAKE A DEEP BREATH! The next time you feel uptight, try taking a minute to slow down and breathe deeply from your abdomen.

TALK IT OUT. Bottled-up feelings create more stress.

GET SOME FRESH AIR. Nature can act as a diversion and give you a break from a hectic schedule.

LAUGH! Humor can be a powerful antidote for stress!

VISUALIZE. Close your eyes and picture yourself somewhere peaceful. Stay there until you feel yourself begin to relax.

STRETCH. Stretching feels good and releases a lot of tension.

Learn techniques to reduce stress

Manage your time. Make a reasonable schedule that includes time for you. Don’t overcommit or try to accomplish everything at once.

Let it go. No matter how bad things seem right now, it’s only temporary. Tell yourself, “this too shall pass.”

Control worry through mindfulness. By single-tasking during a meal or on a walk, you provide a natural distraction from your current worries.

Find what works for you. Learn yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, or other activities that use movement or breathing exercises to help reduce stress.

Find more stress tips at www.uhs.wisc.edu/health-topics/stress/

Don’t underestimate these daily basics:

FUEL YOUR BODY. Eating healthy food helps power your mind and body throughout the day. This helps buffer life’s daily stressors.

SLEEP. A good night’s sleep (7–8 hours) helps you think more clearly, stay more focused, and keeps your immune system strong.

GET PHYSICAL. Exercise is key to reducing and preventing stress. Try to find something you enjoy and make time for 30 minutes of it every day.

Have a couple minutes?

Visit uhs.wisc.edu/relax/ for guided audio relaxation exercises. They’re designed to help you focus, regain energy, and reduce stress.

UHS Can Help

If stress is leading to difficulties such as insomnia, fatigue, headaches, anxiety, or muscle tension, you might benefit from the following services:

- Acupuncture*
- Meditation
- Stress and sleep management
- Wellness sessions
- Yoga
- Massage therapy*
- Relaxation training

Just drop in to UHS counseling services anytime Monday—Friday, 9 am—4 pm for a consultation. Let the staff member know what service you’re interested in.

*There is a fee for these services. Questions about a service? Call 608-265-5600 (option 2).