



RASGAS MEDICAL SERVICES
DEPARTMENT

STRESS





WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a pattern of 'stone age' reactions that occur in response to stressor exposure. It prepares the human organism for fight or flight – i.e. for physical activity. It is a kind of 'revving up' or 'stepping on the gas'



**Stressed
!**



Stressor



WHAT IS STRESS?

When confronted with a stressor, hormones are released into the blood stream which will cause physiological responses designed to improve physical and mental performance



- Acceleration of heart and lung action (Raise BP, more O₂)
- Inhibition of stomach and intestinal action
- Constriction of blood vessels in many parts of the body
- Liberation of nutrients for muscular action
- Dilation of blood vessels for muscles
- Inhibition of tear glands and salivation (Dry Mouth)
- Dilation of pupil (Better Vision)
- Relaxation of bladder
- Inhibition of erection





WHAT IS STRESS?

OK.

So feelings of stress can sometimes be a good thing, because it generally improves performance.

The stress response is normally self regulating once the danger is gone.

But, physical threats are not the only things to trigger this response



STRESS

Psychological ‘threats’ associated with work, home life, interpersonal relationships major life changes, illness etc can set off the same alarm system.

These ‘threats’ tend to be prolonged, consequently you may be running on the flight or fight reaction longer than it is intended to operate.



STRESS

**Long term activation
of the stress
response system
can disrupt almost
all your body's
processes, and
increase the risk of
illness**

**In response to
stressful events,
you can experience
one, two or all of the
following stages:**



STRESS STAGE 1

MOBILIZATION OF ENERGY

All bodily activity is increased in response to a stressor that is frightening, such as a near car accident. This starts the body's "fight-flight" reaction. You feel your heart pounding and your palms feel sweaty.

SYMPTOMS:

- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Rapid breathing
- Sweating
- Decreased digestion rate, creating butterflies and indigestion



STRESS STAGE 2

CONSUMING ENERGY

If there is no escape from Stage 1, the body will begin to release stored sugars and fats, using up its bodily resources.

SYMPTOMS:

- Feeling driven
- Feeling pressured
- Tiredness and fatigue
- Increase in smoking, coffee drinking and/or alcohol consumption
- Anxiety memory loss
- Acute illnesses such as colds and flu



STRESS STAGE 3

EXHAUSTING ENERGY STORES

If the stressful situation is not resolved, you may become chronically stressed. The body's need for energy resources exceeds its ability to produce them.

SYMPTOMS:

Serious illnesses such as:

- Heart disease
- Ulcers

As well as:

- Mental illness
- Insomnia (difficulty sleeping)
- Errors in judgment
- Personality changes



POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF CHRONIC STRESS

ON YOUR BODY

Headache
Chest pain
Pounding heart
High blood pressure
Shortness of breath
Muscle aches
Back pain
Clenched jaws
Tooth grinding
Stomach upset
Constipation
Diarrhea
Increased sweating
Tiredness
Sleep problems
Weight gain or loss
Sex problems
Skin breakouts

ON YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Anxiety
Restlessness
Worrying
Irritability
Depression
Sadness
Anger
Mood swings
Job dissatisfaction
Feeling insecure
Confusion
Burnout
Forgetfulness
Resentment
Guilt
Inability to concentrate
Seeing only the negatives

ON YOUR BEHAVIOR

Overeating
Under-eating
Angry outbursts
Drug abuse
Excessive drinking
Increased smoking
Social withdrawal
Crying spells
Relationship conflicts
Decreased productivity
Blaming others



LITTLE THINGS MEAN ALOT

**It is often the build up of little things that
can really stress you out.**

These little things can be categorized into:

- **EXTERNAL EXASPERATIONS**

- **INTERNAL IRRITATIONS**



EXTERNAL EXASPERATIONS

External exasperations are things that happen TO you. You may have control of some, and how much you let them affect you, but there are times when they may extend beyond your control.

Some examples of external stressors are:

- Major life changes
 - Environment
 - Family
 - Workplace
- Unpredicted events





INTERNAL IRRITATIONS

Some stressors can be self induced.

You know the ones – those feelings that pop into your head and cause unrest!

- FEARS
- UNCERTAINTY
- ATTITUDE
- UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS





STRESS

Face it, not a day in your life will go by without encountering a situation or event that may trigger stress.

Understanding the sources of your stress is the first step in learning to manage it.

So what stresses you out?



AND NOW –

THE GOOD NEWS!

**There are some simple,
things you can do to help
relieve chronic stress.**



GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally



CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Develop a support system and share your feelings.

Perhaps a friend or family member can help you see your problem in a different light.

Talking with someone else can help clear your mind of confusion so that you can focus on problem solving



EXERCISE REGULARLY

Find at least 30 minutes, three times per week to do something physical.

Nothing beats aerobic exercise to dissipate the excess energy.

Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress.

During times of high stress, choose things you like to do.

Be physically fit in ways appropriate for your age, rather than being sedentary.



EAT A BALANCED NUTRITIOUS DIET

Be mindful of what you put in your body. Healthy eating fuels your mind, as well as your body.

Take time to eat breakfast in the morning, it will help keep you going throughout the day.

Eating several balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day will give you the energy to think rationally and clearly.

Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress.



REDUCE CAFFEINE AND SUGAR

Avoid consuming too much caffeine and sugar.

In excessive amounts, the temporary "highs" they provide often end in fatigue or a "crash" later.

You'll feel more relaxed, less jittery or nervous, and you'll sleep better.

In addition, you'll have more energy, less heartburn and fewer muscle aches.



DO SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF EVERY DAY

**Take time out from the hustle and bustle of life
for leisure time.**

**Too much work is actually inefficient and can
lead to burnout.**

**Recognize when you are most stressed and
allow yourself some reasonable breaks.**

**When things feel especially difficult, take a walk
or change your scenery.**

Most importantly, have fun.

Do things that make you happy.



MANAGE TIME

One of the greatest sources of stress is over-commitment or poor time management.

Plan ahead.

Make a reasonable schedule for yourself and include time for stress reduction as a regular part of your schedule.

When you try to take care of everything at once it can seem overwhelming and as a result, you may not accomplish anything.

Instead, make a list of what tasks you have to do, and then complete them one at a time, checking them off as they're completed



PRIORITISE

Give priority to the most important tasks and do those first.

If a particularly unpleasant task faces you, tackle it early in the day and get it over with. You will experience less anxiety the rest of the day as a result.

Most importantly, do not overwork yourself. Resist the temptation to schedule things back-to-back.

All too often, we underestimate how long things will take.



DELEGATE TASKS...

...and break up big projects:

Being efficient and effective means you must delegate tasks and prioritize, schedule, budget and plan your precious time.

Aim to work in short, intensive periods, which allow you to rest in between.

Break big projects into smaller, more manageable tasks so you don't feel overwhelmed and nothing gets done as a result.



HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Know your limits.

**Whether personally or professionally,
be realistic about how much you can
do.**

**Set limits for yourself and learn to say
“no” to more work and commitments.**



REFRAME PROBLEMS

See problems as opportunities.

As a result of positive thinking, you will be able to handle whatever is causing your stress.

Refute negative thoughts and try to see the glass as half full.

It is easy to fall into the rut of seeing only the negative when you are stressed.

Your thoughts can become like a pair of dark glasses, allowing little light or joy into your life.



DON'T BE OVER-CONTROLLING

Don't try to control events or other people.

**Many circumstances in life are beyond
your control, particularly the behavior of
others.**

**Consider that we live in an imperfect
world.**

**Learn to accept what is, for now, until the
time comes when perhaps you can change
things**



AND FINALLY.....

Maintain your sense of humor.

This includes the ability to laugh at yourself.

Watch a funny movie: the sillier the plot the better.

The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.