

Tips for Stress Management

Stress is a fight or flight mental and physical reaction to challenging circumstances that can impact our:

- **Behavior:** Appetite changes, crying, social withdrawal, and unhealthy coping mechanisms.
- **Body:** Increased heart rate, pulse, blood pressure, alertness, rapid breathing, muscle tension, and cortisol production (the stress hormone) and suppression in the digestive system, immune system, and sleep.
- **Thoughts and Feelings:** Agitation, anxiety, depression, forgetfulness, indecisiveness, negativity, overwhelm, and sadness.



Many causes of stress only expand as we age, which is why it's important to establish habits and routines for a healthy lifestyle, such as:

1 Identify the Source:
Take an inventory of your life, from sleep habits to social activity, to see where big or small stressors are accumulating.

2 Get Good Sleep:
Regular sleep helps to maintain your physical and mental health, including your mood, cortisol levels, and ability to focus.

3 Care for a Pet or Plant: Having a pet helps us to be more active and less lonely, and plants are a great alternative if that's too much responsibility.

4 Exercise:
An active lifestyle is great for the brain as we age! As long as you get your body moving, you can exercise however you like to release endorphins and lower stress.

5 Find Community:
It's important to find and continue companionship as you age so you'll always have a network of people you can rely on when you're stressed.

6 Engage in an Activity:
Whether it's solving puzzles, expressing yourself through art, or taking up a volunteer position, it's important to have a sense of purpose in something that engages you.

7 Eat Well:
Staying hydrated and eating a well-balanced diet is a great way to stay mentally sharp, boost your energy, and live a healthy lifestyle. Avoid added sugars, alcohol, artificial sweeteners, and caffeine, and consider food with magnesium, protein, omega-3 fatty acids, and dietary fiber.

8 Relax and Reflect:
Find balance in practicing mindfulness and avoiding overstimulation through meditating, journaling, and connecting with nature.