

Dealing with stress



Occasional stress is common in everyday life, however, getting stressed often can be damaging for your health. An extreme amount of stress can not only increase your risk for heart disease and cause problems with your sleep, but it can also have a negative impact on your symptoms. In fact, stress may trigger flare ups.^{1,2}

Eating well to help manage stress³

Believe it or not, the food that you eat could have an impact on your level of stress. Some foods may help manage the levels of stress hormones in your body, such as foods that are high in vitamin B, omega-3 fatty acids and magnesium. Foods that help to promote balanced blood sugar levels and maintain a healthy gut may also help to relieve stress. Below is a list of foods that, in moderation, may help with managing stress:³

- Avocados
- Broccoli
- Eggs
- Oily fish
- Quinoa
- Almonds and walnuts
- Greek yoghurt

Remember that before changing your diet, you should consult your doctor to make sure you are making the right choices to support your health.

10 methods to help relieve stress^{2,4}



Avoiding stressful situations

- If a job is particularly stressful, speaking to the manager about how to solve this is an option, or considering getting a new job
 - If watching the news is distressing, consider not watching it on television
 - If the journey to work is becoming stressful, consider alternative routes or using public transport
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Getting plenty of sleep

- It's important to aim for at least 7–8 hours of sleep every night
 - If there are problems with sleeping, speak to your doctor or see a sleep specialist
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Getting active

- **Exercise** can help to combat stress
 - Even though the body is put under physical stress, it can lower stress hormones in the long run
 - Yoga is particularly popular as a method of stress relief
 - Check with your doctor before starting any new exercise routine to make sure it is right for you
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Lighting a candle

- Lighting a scented candle, also known as aromatherapy, can help to reduce stress levels
 - Some scents such as lavender and ylang ylang can be particularly soothing
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Talking it out

- Friends and family can offer great support, but sometimes it might be easier to talk through a problem with somebody you are not close to so they can give a fresh perspective
 - Consider talking to a professional psychologist, social worker or counsellor – they can help to find new ways to handle your challenges
 - Consider joining a support group to talk to other people that are facing similar challenges
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Calming your mind

- Meditation has been shown to improve mood and reduce stress
- Mindfulness is a practice that can help combat negative thinking and stress – to find out more about mindfulness, [see the Mindfulness page on this website](#)



Doing what you love

- Take time out of your day to allow time for the fun things that you enjoy
- Try and build these activities into your weekly schedule



Making some changes

- Some symptoms can make everyday tasks harder – but there are some changes that can be made to make tasks less strenuous
- If typing is hurting the hands, try voice recognition software
- If cooking is becoming difficult, there are utensils available that have bigger grips to make things easier



Learning to say no

- Not all stressors are within your control, but some are
- Take control of some of these stressors by saying no more often – juggling too many responsibilities can often leave people feeling overwhelmed.



Breathing

- Deep breathing exercises can help to relax
 - The goal of deep breathing is to focus the awareness on breathing – making it slower and deeper helps to slow the heart rate, allowing you to feel more peaceful
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How we think matters

Your thoughts can affect the way you feel mentally and physically.⁵ Negative thoughts can worsen pain and fatigue and negatively affect the immune system. On the other hand, positive thoughts may help to boost mood and relieve stress and pain. Watching a funny television show, talking to a friend or listening to some happy music are just some simple ways you could boost your mood.⁵

Always speak to your healthcare professional before making changes to your health or exercise routine.

If you are looking for other ways of dealing with stress, take a look at the Communicating and getting support resource. Alternatively, if you are finding yourself feeling stressed and overwhelmed often, speak to your doctor, they will have some options to help you.

References: **1.** Yaribeygi H et al. EXCLI J 2017;16:1057–1072. **2.** Arthritis Foundation. How stress affects arthritis. Available at: <https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/emotional-well-being/stress-management/how-stress-affects-arthritis> [Accessed March 2022]. **3.** Cleveland Clinic. Eat these foods to reduce stress and anxiety. Available at: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/eat-these-foods-to-reduce-stress-and-anxiety/> [Accessed March 2022]. **4.** HelpGuide. Quick stress relief. Available at: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/quick-stress-relief.htm> [Accessed March 2022]. **5.** Arthritis Foundation. Five positive ways to boost your mood and relieve stress and pain. Available at: <http://blog.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/boost-mood-relieve-stress-pain/#more-1150>. [Accessed March 2022].

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