

A stylized, light gray illustration of a plant with a central stem, several large leaves, and a cluster of small, round buds or flowers. The plant is positioned on the left side of the slide, extending from the bottom to the top. The background is a dark gray vertical band on the left and a light gray textured area on the right.

NUTRITION AND STRESS

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Stress can be a good thing, but..

- When we feel threatened or under attack, brain chemicals and adrenal hormones are released into the bloodstream. They enable us to think quickly or to run away from a threat.
- With ongoing stress, these "fight or flight" chemicals are released continuously and can begin to interfere with the body's ability to stay in balance.



Types of stress

- Physical
- Environmental
- Psychological – life events, emotional
 - Stressful event (death of loved one)
 - “stressors of modern living” are also profound: financial gains and losses, employment disruption, relationship problems, legal troubles, and moving are examples of stressors for which we have no automatic mitigation ritual or process.
- Eustress – positive event
- **The intensity of a reaction to a stressor varies from person to person**



Common symptoms of acute stress



- A fast heartbeat.
- A headache.
- A stiff neck and/or tight shoulders.
- Back pain.
- Fast breathing.
- Sweating, and sweaty palms.
- An upset stomach, nausea, or diarrhea.

Over time, stress can affect YOUR

- Immune system
- Heart
- Muscle
- Stomach
- Lungs
- Skin



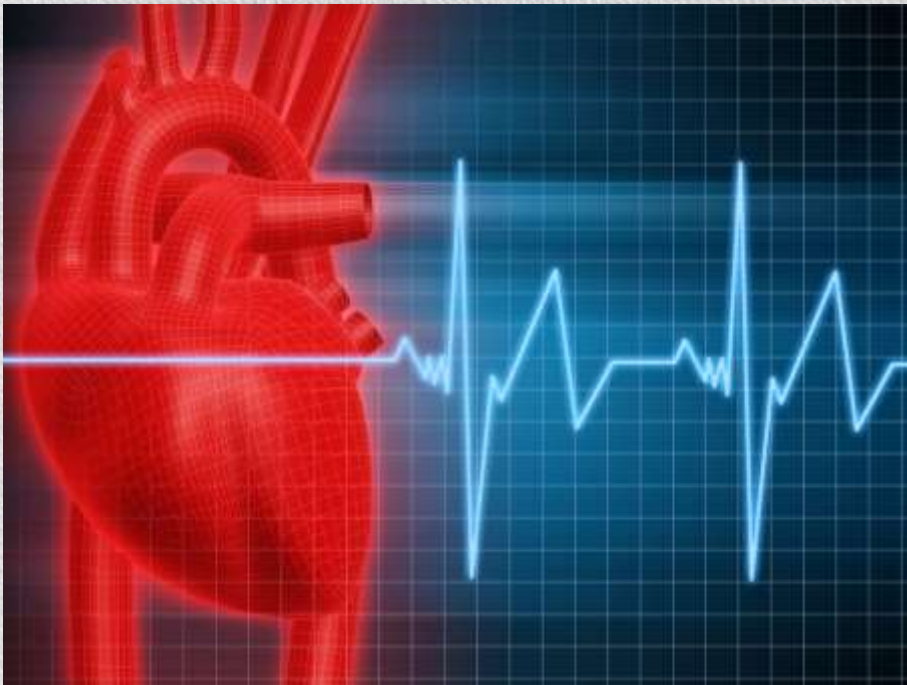
Physical effects of stress

- Long term stressors:
 - ↑ blood cholesterol, which ↑ risk of atherosclerosis and heart disease
 - Chronic stress => hostile personality, type A
- Short term stressors:
 - delay in processing and clearing of fats.
 - Acute stress => exhaustion
- Risk of infection increases – suppressed immune system
- Oxidative damage – related to aging
 - Vitamin E has been shown to increase immune response and decrease cognitive decline



Some organs are more susceptible to stress

- Adrenal gland – hormones
- GI tract – ulcers, altered immune function
- Heart pumps blood supplying oxygen and nutrients to all body tissues



Stress often leads to poor eating

- Eating can be a coping mechanism for alleviating and dealing with stress and emotions by either under-eating or overeating
- Overweight individuals, notably women, tend to overeat or binge eat for non-physiological reasons particularly during negative emotional states.
- Food choices tend to be poor
 - ✓ Comfort foods – high in calories
 - ✓ Higher fat, sugar, salt



Stress also affects how the body stores fat and changes appetite

- Weight gain during stress – abdomen v. hips (↑ heart risk)

How do you cope?

- Take a quiz

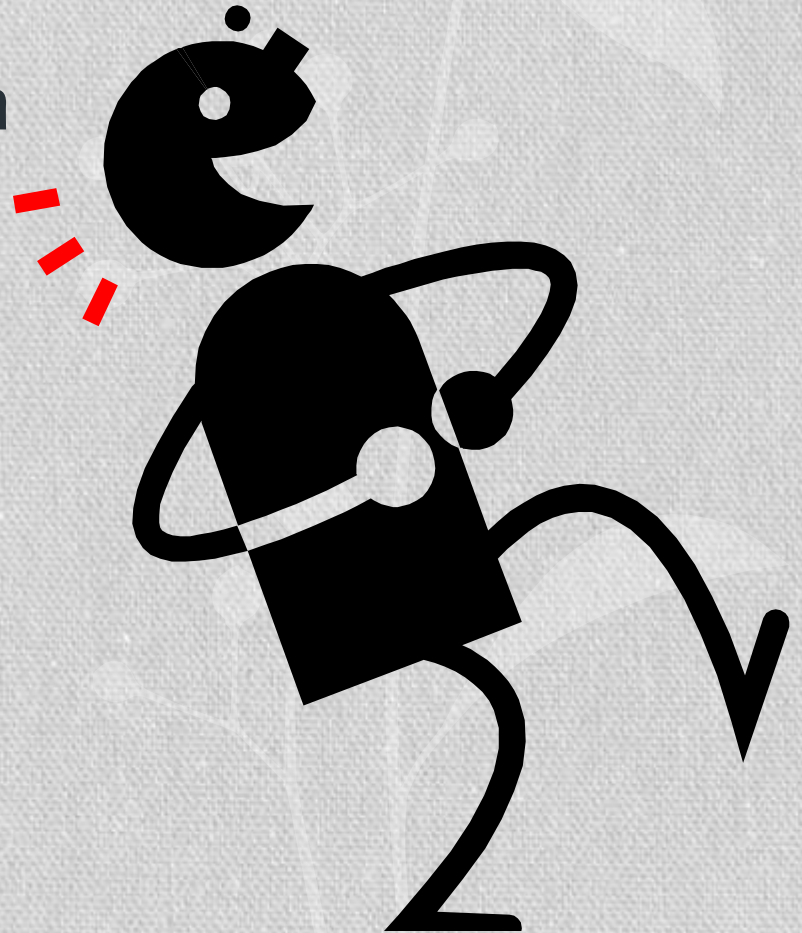




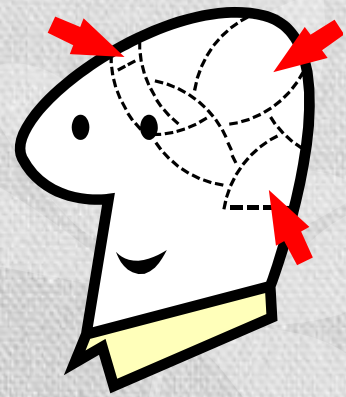
EATING WELL TO
REDUCE THE EFFECTS
OF STRESS

Good nutrition and Exercise!

- Will ↓ effects of stress
- Improve immune function
- Increase energy
- More ability to cope!!



Better brain chemicals?



- Certain brain chemicals called neurotransmitters dictate how we experience emotion and how we feel.
- Neurotransmitters generate feelings of happiness, mental alertness and calmness.
- Deficiencies of the chemicals can lead to depression, irritability, anxiety, sleeplessness and food cravings.
- **Neurotransmitters are derived in part from the foods we eat.**
- **Dietary changes may help to increase their levels naturally and improve the body's response to stress, countering its effects on our health and moods.**

Balanced meals

- Choosing balanced meals containing nutrient-rich foods that will slowly fuel our brains throughout the day is the ideal way to keep our bodies in balance during stressful periods.
- Proper proportions of whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and healthy fats can promote health and reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases.
- Will also prevent weight gain and associated health and psychological problems



Complex Carbohydrates

- Increase the amount of serotonin in your brain, a powerful neurotransmitter that boosts your mood, calms you down and helps you sleep.
 - Food sources: fruits, vegetables, whole grains and starchy foods.
- Simple sugars (found in candy, syrups, table sugar, alcohol and sweetened fruits), cause a brief spike in blood sugar which may make you feel better in the short term but can be followed by a quick drop in energy and leave you craving more.



Protein-rich foods

- Slows down the rate at which sugar is released into your bloodstream and keeps your blood sugar balanced.
- Keeps you feeling full longer, making you less likely to grab for a high-calorie sweet snack.
- Food sources: dairy foods (cheese, milk, yogurt), eggs, fish, meats, legumes (beans and lentils), peanut butter, poultry and tofu.



Essential Fats

- These fats (omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids) can only be obtained through our diet.
- Play a role in brain function
- Research shows that seafood such as salmon and other oily fish contain omega-3 fatty acids, which appear to help relieve mild depression.
- Food sources: nuts (almonds, walnuts), oils (canola, flax, soybean), oily fish, and seeds (flax, pumpkin).



Healthy eating habits help us react to stress

- Eat small meals and snacks that include protein-rich foods to maintain a stable blood sugar.
- Be aware of portions.
- Don't skip meals.
- Don't eliminate entire food groups – each food group provides its own unique nutrients.
- Have breakfast – skipping this important meal can lead to impulse snacking on sweets.

Better food choices

- Whole grains
- Whole fruits
- Colorful vegetables
- Healthy fats (in moderation)
- Foods with less sugar
- Watch caffeine
- Limit alcohol





And, stay active!

- Physical activity has countless benefits, improving both physical and mental health. Try to get at least 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity most days of the week.



Conclusion

- Our response to stress matters!
- Learn your coping skills that are helpful and/or harmful
- Plan meals and snacks so that you will have healthy foods on hand
- Take time to eat healthy meals and snacks
- Be active
- Try other activities to relieve stress and keep your mind off poor food choices

DON'T FORGET TO
RELAX!!

