

# How to Triumph Over Stress & Protect Your Health

By Donia Alawi & Barbara Swanson \*



In our world today, our body has to handle time deadlines, financial worries, and job security worries. Many of us get home from working an 8 hour day and then need to deal with our children's social lives. Most urban areas have air and water pollution...and how many of us wind up eating fast food once in a while to help handle time crunches and exhaustion?!

These are stresses that most of us face daily. It can make us anxious, tense, depressed, and sometimes even cause chronic pain. Long-term, stress causes your body to produce a toxic chemical overload that can even lead to serious degenerative conditions to your heart, raise your blood pressure and interfere with memory functions.

*There is good news!* **You can learn to help modify the way you respond to stressful circumstances.** Even if you feel your life is falling apart, you can minimize the negative effects that life's challenges have had on your body.

There are many physical, emotional and even spiritual techniques and ways that you can learn and practice. Additionally, **a healthy diet and certain supplements can help reduce stress** and its negative physical and emotional impact.

## The Stress Response

We are wired with a fight-or-flight response in our body. It is designed to help us survive. When we have stress, this type of response occurs automatically, and it alters nearly every physiological process in our bodies. The stress response is designed to deal with immediate survival in the face of life-threatening, short-term threats, such as someone swerving into your lane. We need this response!

BUT-- it was not designed for the chronic daily stresses that we now face as we commute to our work, in our jobs and with our children.

Steven Hall, MD says<sup>1</sup>:

*"We have learned that stress is cumulative. Our bodies add up all the stresses we face and treat them as one. It doesn't matter whether stresses are situational (sick children, stop-and-go traffic or an impending deadline), chemical (pesticide-laden food, toxic fumes or a heavy metal exposure), physiological (illness, overexertion or lack of sleep), or psychological (fear or grief). If we have too many stresses at one time, when we add them up, the total is the same to our bodies as if we were staring a lion in the eye."*

## The Health Effects of Stress

Stress **stimulates the adrenal glands and exhausts them**, causing them to malfunction. A chain reaction can lead to a whole host of diseases and adverse side effects.

One example of how we are physically impacted by stress is our digestive tract. Stress affects the intestines greatly. When one is faced with emotional or psychological stress, **the adrenal glands produce cortisol (a hormone) which affects the intestinal tract by destroying friendly bacteria.** The digestive system becomes impaired. Most people under stress may say that they feel pain in their stomach and that is because long term stress can cause damage to intestinal lining as

the body continues to secrete cortisol.

When we are stressed, blood rushes to our skeletal muscles so we can fight off our attacker or run away from danger. **This withdrawal of blood from the digestive system leaves it in shutdown mode because the body thinks digestion isn't a priority at this time.** Therefore, if we are eating while stressed, we are unable to digest our food. When food sits undigested it rots, causing physical distress and providing food for microbes that excrete waste and give off gases.<sup>2</sup>

## What You Can Do

### How to Use Foods & Supplements to Reduce Stress

If a person cannot change their lifestyle to lead a less stress-filled life, —and many of us are exactly in that position, with job pressures, personal commitments, commutes, etc.—then ....

There are several key nutrients that can help mitigate the side effects of stress.

- a. **One should concentrate on protecting the digestive tract on a daily basis through the use of friendly (probiotic) bacteria such as acidophilus and bifidus.** If these good bacteria are ingested every day, one can stand stress better and cope with it.
- b. **Support the kidneys and liver during stressful times with specific foods.** The kidneys and liver repair, process foods and detoxify the body during sleep. Eating healthy foods and taking liver and kidneys supportive supplements can reduce the negative side effects of stress on the rest of the body.

Following are some of the foods and supplements that support your liver and kidneys:

## FOODS



- **ADD parsley and celery** to your salads, or even better, drink a glass of juiced parsley and celery. Both are strong diuretics and will increase urine flow and help flush the kidneys.
- **EAT an Apple a Day!** Nature has provided us an abundant number of cleansing foods that are gentle, yet will detoxify and restore health to the kidneys and urinary system. Yes, the fruit of the apple tree is considered one of the best all-around healing foods nature has provided mankind.

*"We say, after an exhaustive study of its chemistry, that in our opinion there is no other remedial agent...in the whole range of known therapeutic agents that can compare with the apple tree."<sup>3</sup>*

**The apple is rich in vitamins, minerals, especially organic sodium** that the body uses in its buffering system against acids. Fresh organic apples are best eaten raw. Much of the nutritive value is contained in the skin. Make sure you buy only organically grown apples, whenever possible, to avoid pesticide residue and the paraffin wax coating that is found on standard agribusiness apples.

- **ADD Artichokes:** Splurge this spring and eat a couple a week! Artichokes have phytochemicals which improve liver function and lower blood cholesterol levels.
- **USE Lemon juice daily:** Squeeze fresh **lemon** into a glass of water once a day. Lemons benefit bile formation and therefore support liver function. You can also add a tablespoon of **organic apple cider vinegar**. **Vinegar** can energize the liver meridians.
- **EAT AT LEAST one** of these vegetables daily: **broccoli, cauliflower and/or cabbage.**

These are all high in organic sulfur. These vegetables also contain a phytochemical that stimulates detoxifying enzymes in the liver as well as in the gut.

- **SNACK on a couple of Brazil nuts a day.** Brazil nuts have vital antioxidants helpers such as selenium.

## SUPPLEMENTS

- **TAKE your friendly bacteria** every day (increase during stressful days)
- **USE enzymes with foods.** Every meal with enzymes is a meal that is for vitality.
- **EAT wild-crafted blue green algae** for its valuable nutritional profile especially minerals,
- **ADD a protective antioxidant such as CoQ10, Grape extracts, or a concentrated mixed berry powder.**



- Remember, I offer a FREE Health Consultation to help you select the appropriate supplements.

## The Body & Mind Connection: Let Your Mind Support Your Body

### Exercise

An important way to cope with stress is to do a **vigorous type of exercise to work off the extra hormone the body produces so the body can return to a pre-stress state.** A consistent, daily brisk 10 minute walk will help change your physical state, and produce beneficial brain chemistry to reduce stress levels. And when it is not possible to exercise, 10 minutes on the **Chi Machine** helps shift the energy during the day or prepare the body for sleep.



- **A committed daily practice** of mindfulness—be it yoga, tai chi or prayer—will help keep you in a calm state.
- **Learn to listen diligently to your body** to detect the slightest whimper of stress before it takes root. Remember: when you notice how you feel, you begin to have the power to change your responses to whatever is going on around you.

Dr. Kenford Nedd, MD recommends that as soon as a difficult event or situation occurs, tell yourself, "I can handle this." Apply the following techniques to take control:

- 1- Take a deep breath
  - 2- Relax as you exhale
  - 3- Imagine the tension leaving your body
  - 4- Look up and smile
  - 5- Perfect your posture
  - 6- Think of something that makes you happy. When you think happy, you act happy; deliberately practicing this even in tough times is a key to reducing stress.<sup>4</sup>
- Repeat as needed.

## Final thoughts

You can take control, even when you cannot control all the circumstances of your life. With the above comprehensive approaches:

- optimizing digestive function,
- healthier foods,
- supportive food based supplements,
- relaxation techniques and exercise

-- you don't have to face the severe physiological consequences of stress.

Life is too short, so treat yourself good; get a massage once a week, relax, forget the world, eat lots of organically grown fruits and veggies, go to sleep early, go for walks, play with children and our animal friends, smell the roses, .....etc. **You are worth it.**



### References:

1. Hall, Steven. (February 2007). "Stress Respose". Sound Consumers. Pgs. 1-5.
2. Nedd, Kenford. (February 2006). "Triumph over stress". *Alive*. Pgs. 34-35.
3. Tonn, Sandra. (September 2004). "Healthy made simple". *Alive*. pgs. 26-27.

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