

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



November, 2008

Managing Stress



Feeling the effects of stress is a normal part of life, especially when you are facing major challenges. But each person responds to stress differently. What causes a lot of stress for one person may not cause stress for someone else.

That's because a large part of stress is a matter of perception-how you view a situation determines how much stress it causes you. Therefore, only you can best evaluate the amount of stress in your life and learn better ways to cope with it.

Ask yourself the following questions to learn what is causing you stress and how you respond:

What job, family, or personal stress do I have?

Chronic stress can be caused by an ongoing stressful situation such as:

- * Family or relationship problems.
- * Caring for a family member who is elderly, has chronic health problems, or is disabled. Caregiving is a major source of stress.
- * Job stress.
- * A family member who is under stress.

Do I have recent major changes in my life

Stress is an unavoidable part of life and can be good or bad. We routinely experience both types of stress when we go through life changes such as getting married, having a baby, or having a child move away from home.

Some behaviors and lifestyle choices can interfere with the ways your body seeks relief from stress. For

example, as you sleep, your body recovers from the stresses of the day. If you are not getting enough sleep or your sleep is frequently interrupted, you are losing a chance to recover from stress.

Your actions and behavior can be a sign of stress. Some people who face a lot of stress respond by smoking, drinking alcohol, or eating poorly. The health risks posed by these behaviors are made even worse by stress. Your body experiences stress-related wear and tear from two sources: the stress itself and the unhealthy habits you've developed to respond to stress. Evaluate how you respond to stress by identifying your positive and negative coping strategies.

(Over)



Benefits Corner

Flu Shots

Annual flu shots are covered at 100% and not subject to deductible or co-payments. To find out more information regarding the reimbursement process for flu shots, please check with your entity's CHP contact.

Open Enrollment

It is that time of year for Open Enrollment. Open Enrollment occurs annually and allows eligible employees and/or eligible dependents to enroll in a benefit plan, drop a benefit plan or change benefit plans without requiring a qualifying event. Employees will be able to choose between the benefit plans that are offered by their entity. Please note, dental and vision plans require a 2 year commitment before they can be dropped.

Please check with your entity to find out when their Open Enrollment/CHP Educational Training meetings are being held.

New ID cards will be issued to all CHP Members in January 2009

Managing Stress

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Do my beliefs cause me stress?

Some people feel stressed because their beliefs conflict with the way they are living their life. Examine your beliefs to see if conflict between what you believe and what your life is like causes you stress.

If you are not sure that you are stressed or are not sure what is making you feel the way you do, you need to discover what is causing stress. One way to do this is to keep a stress journal, a written record that can help you identify stressors so you can find better ways to cope with them.

Relieving Stress

Some of the most useful stress management skills you can learn are healthy coping strategies. Many of these can be done with little or no instruction. No one strategy is preferable-you need to find what works best for you. Using these techniques regularly until they become habits that are part of your lifestyle is the key.

Ways to relax your mind

Writing. There is evidence that writing about stressful events and circumstances may help relieve stress and improve diseases linked to stress.

One way to use writing to deal with stress is to keep a stress journal. This can really help you identify the sources of stress in

your life so that you can find better ways to cope with them.

Expressing your feelings. Discussing how you feel with friends, family members, or a counselor is an important way of coping with and relieving stress. Laughing and crying are also natural ways to release tension and frustration. They are both part of a normal emotional healing process.

Mindfulness activities. Mindfulness activities help relax your mind and are often combined with body-centered relaxation exercises.

Meditation

Guided imagery

Music therapy

Humor therapy

Ways to relax your body

Physical activity. Exercise can reduce stress and the stress response. Aerobic exercise-the kind that increases your heart rate, such as walking, running, bicycling, or swimming-is especially useful for counteracting the harmful effects of stress.

Doing something you enjoy. A meaningful activity helps relieve tension. This can be a hobby, such as gardening; a creative activity, such as writing, crafts, or art; or doing volunteer work for a cause that benefits others. Playing with and caring for pets also can help you relax.

Source: www.webmd.com