



# ARE YOU STRESSED?

## QUIKRISK™ SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST

This test can help you determine whether stress is something you should discuss with your health care provider. Circle the appropriate response next to each true statement and add up your total according to the points in each column.

	Yes	No	
<i>I've recently experienced the loss of a loved one, job, relationship or material wealth.</i>	10	0	
<i>I've recently had a major change in my life, e.g., job, moving, marriage or birth of a child.</i>	10	0	
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely/Never
<i>I smoke, drink or overeat.</i>	10	5	0
<i>I skip on sleep.</i>	10	5	0
<i>I tend to be sedentary (little or no exercise).</i>	10	5	0
<i>I get worked up over traffic jams and other events beyond my control.</i>	10	5	0
<i>I tend to lose my temper.</i>	10	5	0
<i>I tend to take on more than I can handle.</i>	10	5	0
<i>I feel that everything I do must be perfect.</i>	10	5	0
<i>I tend to see the glass half-empty.</i>	10	5	0

### HOW DID YOU DO?

If you scored 0-25 points, you're probably doing a good job of controlling stress. Keep it up!

If your total was 30-50, you're at medium risk for letting stress take control of your life and should discuss it with your provider during your next visit.

If you scored 55-75 points, you're at medium-high risk and may want to schedule some time soon to discuss stress management with your provider.

If you scored from 80 to 100, you may be considered at high risk for stress-related problems and should speak with a health care professional without delay.

## Stress Dos and Don'ts



- **DO learn how to relax.** Relaxation can reduce blood pressure and muscle tension, slow your breathing and increase blood flow to major muscles.
- **DON'T leave stress unchecked.** An over-active stress response can raise your risk for life-limiting conditions such as obesity, heart disease and depression.
- **DO remember that you can't save time,** but you can manage it well. Another reason to live in the present.
- **DON'T mask stress symptoms** with drugs, alcohol or medications.
- **DO modify expectations** of yourself during times of stress or stressful events.
- **DON'T be afraid** to seek assistance from family, friends or professionals. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- **DO learn to prioritize.** Some things can wait another day.
- **DON'T underestimate the power of spiritual health.** Adopt a regular spiritual practice that allows you to slow down, appreciate and enrich your life — meditate, pray, practice Tai Chi or yoga, or enjoy nature.
- **DO treat yourself well.** Take time out from daily stresses by participating in group sports, social events or hobbies. If none of these ideas appeal to you, try taking a class in something you enjoy.

# REAL-WORLD STRESS RELIEF

SLOWING DOWN WITHOUT LETTING UP



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## WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is your body's response to change. There are two main types: **acute stress**, which occurs in response to a specific event, such as a fender bender or an argument; and **chronic stress**, which usually results from unrelenting pressures such as financial problems, overwhelming responsibilities or dysfunctional relationships.



## WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

Your body reacts to threats (either real or perceived) with a physiological response known as the **fight-or-flight response**. This releases stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenalin into the bloodstream, allowing the body to rise to the occasion with extra strength (to fight) or stamina (to flee).

The fight-or-flight reaction is also known as the **stress response**. Over time, this constant state of being at "red alert" can leave you feeling stressed- or burned-out, and may cause a host of health problems.

## WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT STRESS?

Whether stress affects you negatively or positively is often determined by how you react to a situation, not the situation itself. You can learn to control your reactions to prevent stress from taking over. Any number of self-help resources can teach you how to do this, but advice generally falls into one of three categories:

1. **Take good care of yourself.**  
A healthy body makes you more resilient to life's curveballs.
2. **Adjust your attitude.** How you perceive situations affects how stressed you feel.
3. **Get help when you need it.** Many effective ways to manage stress are available.

This brochure will help you get started in reducing stress and feeling better.

## Take the Test!

The quiz on the facing panel can help you quickly determine whether stress is something you should address sooner rather than later.

STEP

1

## Taking Care of Yourself

**LIMIT** alcohol, don't overeat and don't smoke. Each makes your body more prone to stress.

**EXERCISE** regularly. Going for a walk, a bike ride or a run helps boost the activity of mood-enhancing brain chemicals and can trigger the release of your body's natural stress fighters.

**EAT** a healthy diet that is low in animal fats and high in plant foods — whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables. You'll help your body maintain a good balance of stress-fighting nutrients.

**CONSIDER** visiting a qualified nutritionist if you need help getting control over your diet and/or if you want to determine if nutritional supplements or herbs may help.

**GET** sufficient rest. Needs vary, but most people need at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep to feel fully rested.

**PRACTICE** a daily relaxation technique such as deep breathing (in through the nose, out through the mouth), progressive muscle relaxation (tightening, then relaxing muscles from head to toe), or autogenic relaxation (calmly repeating a word such as "quiet" over and over).



STEP

2

## Adjusting Your Attitude

**DON'T** fret over things you can't control such as the weather, traffic conditions or the past.

**SET** realistic goals at home and at work. The distance between unreasonably ambitious goals and what you can actually achieve in the time you have creates needless tension.

**LEARN** to say no. No one can do everything.

**SEE** change as a welcome challenge, not a threat. Use your unique talents to make change occur smoothly.



## Be Here Now

Some stress experts say that learning to live in the present can go a long way toward combating stress. You can't change the past, and fretting about the future won't alter any outcomes. The only time you can change is the present. Work to change that.

**PREPARE** for events that you know may be stressful, such as a presentation or a meeting with your boss. Visualize doing it successfully.

**TRY** not to "awfulize" — the tendency to see trouble around every corner. Try recording all the things that went *right* each day to see that good fortune is also a part of your life.

STEP

3

## Getting Help When You Need It

**TALK** out your problems with family or friends. Don't keep them bottled up.

**RESOLVE** conflicts with people at work by discussing the problems with a supervisor or employee assistance counselor. It is better to confront a problem positively than to let the stress fester.

**JOIN** a self-help group, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous or Nicotine Anonymous, to battle unhealthy addictions.

**TRIUMPH** over excessive worry with the help of a counselor or therapist. Cognitive behavioral therapy, also known as talk therapy, can help "worrywarts" change their negative perceptions.

**CONSIDER** biofeedback, which uses a special machine that monitors physiological changes, such as temperature and heart rate, to retrain your responses to stimuli. Contact the Biofeedback Certification Institute of America at [www.bcia.org](http://www.bcia.org) for a certified specialist.

**CHECK** whether your health plan, employee assistance plan, health care provider or even family or friends may be able to recommend a counselor or therapist who can help.