

The Wellness Connection

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Hectic Holidays



Here is a stress reducing tip for gift shopping: use the internet! It has become much more secure than it was in the past and you just can't beat having all those gifts being delivered to your door. Use a search engine and simply type in what it is that you are shopping for. It will lead you to many stores all over the world that sell the item you wish to buy. Shopping was never easier!



For most of us, holiday shopping and planning will begin early but that doesn't mean it still won't be very hectic. We all want to find the perfect gift for everyone and make sure that the family get-together will be a success. But along with the fun and excitement of the holiday season comes the stress of spending a lot of money on gifts, preparing a tasty meal, and of course, the family drama. Although each of us may look forward to this holiday season all year long, we can't help but feel stressed out with everything that accompanies the decorations and cookies.

Stress plays a crucial role in our health. It is important to keep stress under control because it may lead to health complications. Stress has been found to contribute to high blood pressure, high cholesterol and other cardiac risk factors, such as smoking and overeating. The tips below will aid in dealing with the up-and-coming holiday stress as well as the stress we face daily.



What is Stress?

Stress is our natural reaction to things that bother us in our life. It is a normal part of life and what causes it or how it is handled may differ from person to person. Some of us may feel stress at work or when driving in

heavy traffic. Others may feel stress when needing to remember to take medications or to arrange a ride to the grocery store.

The following are some basic signs of stress:

Dizziness, grinding teeth, difficulty sleeping, racing heart, weight loss/gain, upset stomach, constant worry, loss of sense of humor, anger, crying, depression, compulsive eating, explosive actions, increased drug or alcohol use, and anxiety.

How Stress Affects Our Health:

As of yet, stress has not been directly tied to heart disease, but it has been linked to other cardiac risk factors such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Consistent stress may also expose the body to higher levels of the stress hormones, cortisol and adrenaline. These have been tied to changes in the way that blood clots and ultimately may increase the risk of a heart attack.

How to Cope with Stress:

Although people handle stress differently, there are a few common things everyone can do to assist in lightening the load. Following these coping tips may help lower stress levels.

Coping Tips:

- eat and drink sensibly
- believe in yourself,
- avoid tobacco products
- exercise regularly
- do something relaxing everyday
- reduce obvious daily stressors
- set realistic goals,
- get plenty of sleep
- participate in uplifting activities
- avoid using alcohol and other drugs to treat anxiety



Stress cannot be completely removed from our lives; it is simply a part of life. However, during the stressful holiday season, we can focus on the fun and beauty of Christmas rather than the stress it may cause. Take a drive and view the colorful lights, relax with some hot cocoa, or make a snowman. Whatever the strategy to relax, we should remember most of all, to enjoy ourselves!



Information courtesy of Community Health Centers



A Wellness Lifestyle

What is wellness? It is more than eating your vegetable and fitting in walks, although these are great habits for sure! Wellness is about feeling your best in all areas of your life: physical, mental, and spiritual. Balance of work, play and personal needs leads to wellness. When you are well, you feel focused and relaxed, ready to take on the world. You are able to meet everyday challenges. You have energy to the things you really want to do, with energy to spare. Making changes toward feeling fit, healthy, and well is not always easy. Just take one step at a time.



Remember when you are spending any length of time outside you have to bundle up and stay warm. Exposure to cold can cause life threatening health conditions. You can avoid serious conditions such as frostbite and hypothermia, by protecting yourself before you go outside.

Make sure to :

- **Wear a hat, hood, or scarf, as most heat is lost through the head.**
- **Wear layers, as they provide better insulation and warmth.**
- **Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered if you go outside**
- **Keep clothing dry; if a layer becomes wet, remove it.**

Wellness, as a state of health, is closely associated with your lifestyle. Each person has a responsibility to provide for such health essentials as good nutrition, proper weight control, exercise, and controlling of risk factors such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse. Wellness research shows that Americans who take care of themselves and manage their lifestyles are healthier, more productive, have fewer absences from work and make fewer de-

services. Since lifestyle has been found to be the single most important factor determining your pattern of general health, it is important that you be educated to "take charge" of your daily life and to set healthy lifestyle goals. The choices you make have a dominant influence on your health and wellness. The secret is not in medical care, but consistent self-care. A wellness-oriented lifestyle encourages you to adopt habits and behaviors that

promote better health and an improved quality of life. It also involves the recognition that you have physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs, with each dimension being necessary for optimal levels of functioning. Wellness is a positive approach to living. It is the integration of the body, mind, and spirit; and the appreciation that everything you do, think, feel, and believe has an impact on your state of health.

The Scoop On Safe Shoveling

The blanket of white may be attractive from the inside, but eventually the snow must be moved. Heavy snowfall is not an invitation to suddenly start a strenuous exercise program. An estimated 1,200 people in the United States die each year of coronary artery disease during and after major snowfalls.

Moving heavy snow can also place additional stress and strain on backs and joints. Shoveling can be made even more physically strenuous by cold air, which makes it hard to work and breathe.

Here are a few tips on how to stay safe and healthy once the snow starts to fall and the shoveling begins:

Warm up first. Be sure your muscles are warm before you start shoveling. Warm up a little by walking, doing a few

squats or walking stairs a few times. Cold, tight muscles are more likely to sprain or strain than warm, relaxed muscles. Make sure to stretch your muscles once the warmed up.

Learn how to move properly. While lifting snow, bend at the knees and hips, not at your waist. Pivot your feet rather than twisting your trunk. Keeping your head up will help you keep your back straight. Never throw snow over your shoulder. Pushing the snow puts far less strain on the spine than lifting.

Lift safely. It's less tiring and safer to lift several lighter loads than it is to lift one heavy load. It's also important to keep the load as close to your body as possible

Take frequent breaks. Shoveling for longer than 30 minutes puts you at higher risk for injury because your body is fatigued. Try taking a 5-minute

break every 20 minutes if the snow is heavy.

Drink plenty of water.

Drink at least one 8-ounce glass of water before and after snow shoveling and avoid beverages that can cause dehydration, such as those with alcohol and caffeine.

Use a small- or medium-size, light-weight

snow shovel. Using an oversized shovel won't clear your driveway any quicker and may increase your risk of injury.

Listen to your body. If you experience any warnings signs for heart attack, stop what you are doing immediately and call 9-1-1.

Information courtesy of
Genesishealth.com

