

Exercise Helps Manage Stress

Stress is defined as the body's normal response to the demands of life. When you perceive a threat, large or small, your body produces a surge of hormones that in turn trigger several different systems. Heart rate, blood pressure and your supply of energy all increase to deal with that threat. Other functions are "turned down" if they are not needed, such as the digestive and reproductive systems, growth processes and immune system responses. There also is an impact on mood, motivation and fear. When the threat has passed, your body returns to normal. Without this built-in alarm system, humans probably would not have survived! But when there are constant demands and pressures in life, as is so common in these times, the stress response may not shut down and there can be long term health consequences. Too much stress can contribute to heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, sleep problems, memory impairment, skin problems and depression. Too much stress may even cause you to make more mistakes and to have more accidents.

Exercise is one powerful way to counteract and manage the stress in your life. Physical activity decreases the stress hormones in the body. It increases

your brain's production of endorphins, which improves mood. This may make it easier to deal with stress and the depression it may cause. Exercise provides a distraction, which may help you temporarily forget some of your problems, or put them into perspective. This can help you stay calm and better deal with demands as they arise. Exercise can help you sleep better, and break the vicious cycle of sleep disruption, which can both be caused by stress and worsen stress. Physical activity can give you more energy and help you release muscular tension, too.

Almost any physical activity can help relieve stress. Try a variety of things to find a combination that you like and that works for you. Include some aerobic exercise, that makes your heart beat faster and makes you sweat a little. Brisk walking, swimming, jogging, bike riding and dancing and many sports can provide a good aerobic workout. Soothing exercise like stretching, yoga, or tai chi, may also be very helpful, by slowing your heart rate and relaxing your muscles.

From www.mayoclinic.com

Recipe of the Week : Harvest Green Salad with Orange Vinaigrette

Dressing:

1 teaspoon grated orange zest (orange outer part of the rind)
¼ cup orange juice
2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
¼ tsp salt
3 Tablespoons olive oil
Ground pepper to taste

Salad:

2 cups spinach leaves
3 cups salad greens
1/2 cup almonds (dry roasted or raw)
1 cup red grapes, halved
1/2 cup dried cranberries

- Dressing: Combine orange zest, juice vinegar and salt. Let stand while making salad ingredients (at least 15 minutes). Whisk in olive oil and season with pepper.
- Wash and dry spinach and lettuce leaves. Tear into bite-size pieces and place in large salad bowl. Add almonds, grapes and cranberries to salad greens. Toss.
- Add dressing to salad just before serving.

Nutrition Information

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| Calories: 140 | Carbohydrates: 17g |
| Total fat: 7g | Fiber: 2.5g |
| Saturated fat: 0.8g | Protein: 2.7g |

Tip of the Week

Want to eat more vegetables? Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave. "Zap" sweet potatoes in the microwave for a side dish in minutes. Buy fresh vegetables that are easy to prepare including pre-washed bags of salad greens, baby carrots, grape tomatoes and celery sticks, for a salad in minutes and for quick snacks.

From www.mypyramid.gov