

May/June 2021



IS STRESS REALLY THAT BAD FOR YOUR BODY?

April was stress awareness month, and it's no surprise that it's a hot topic following the most challenging year many of us have ever seen.

But what is stress? And is it really as bad as it's made out to be?

Stress is your body's reaction to feeling threatened or under pressure. In many situations stress is a good thing - it's what makes us hyper-vigilant and prepares our body to fight or run away from a threat.

It's not only useful in dangerous situations, but it can also be helpful in helping us to achieve things in our daily life like meeting the demands of home, work and family life.

So if stress is a normal, natural and in some cases helpful response, why does it have such a bad rap?

Well, acute stress is what we experience in the moment. It's the adrenaline rush, cortisol producing chemical reaction that serves an immediate purpose - such as fight the lion or run away from the crocodile.

It's supposed to be a "quick hit" of useful chemicals, followed by returning to a normal,

healthy and relaxed state. But modern life doesn't work that way. Many people are in a constant state of stress, managing work pressure, family responsibilities and emotional challenges.

When this happens, chronic stress can build - and chronic stress is the stress we've all been warned about.

The good news is that chronic stress is actually pretty easy to keep in check with some simple lifestyle choices and good habits.

Drinking plenty of water, eating nutrient-rich foods and exercising regularly can all have a big impact on your stress levels. As well as getting outside in the fresh air and sunlight, meditation and mindfulness.

In this issue of the newsletter, I'm going to share with you some great stress-busting recipes, exercises, habits and techniques. To help you destress from winter and come out of lockdown feeling cool, calm and relaxed.

Dr Mark Fairclough



STRESS RELIEVING STRETCHES

Most people carry their stress in their jaw, neck and shoulders, as well as their upper and lower back. Doing some simple daily stretches can help relax the muscles and free up your joints. Helping you to relax and feel more comfortable throughout the day.



FORWARD FOLD

Standing with your feet hip-distance apart and with a gentle bend in your knees, start to fold in half. Go as far as is comfortable and if you can, grab your big toes with your index and middle fingers. Take some deep breaths and relax into the fold. Hold the stretch as long as you like, continuing to breathe deeply.



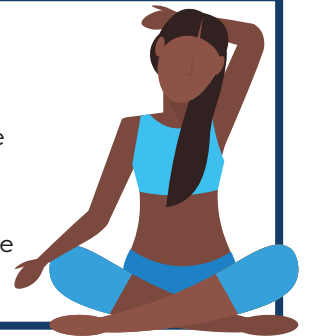
LEGS UP THE WALL

Lay on the floor or on your bed with your bottom a few inches away from the wall. Put your legs up on the wall, straight out with a gentle bend in your knees. If your back feels uncomfortable, use a pillow underneath your tailbone to give it some support. Take some deep breaths and relax here for a few minutes.

**ADDING A
MINI STRETCH
ROUTINE TO YOUR
DAY WILL HELP
TO ALLEVIATE
THE STRAIN YOUR
MUSCLES FEEL.**

UPPER TRAPEZIUS STRETCH

Start standing or sitting up straight. Place one hand on your lower back and the other hand on the opposite side of your head. Gently pull your head towards your shoulder, looking straight ahead, until you feel a stretch in your neck. Take a deep breath and relax. Hold for around 30 seconds before repeating on the other side.



Gorgeous Green Smoothie

Serves: 1

INGREDIENTS

A handful of greens - your choice of baby spinach, pea shoots, etc
Half a pak choi, chopped
A squeeze of fresh lime juice
One apple, skin on, sliced
One banana, peeled, sliced
4 slices cucumber, unpeeled
150ml cold water

INSTRUCTIONS

Put all of the ingredients into a power blender and mix for 30-60 seconds. Add a little extra water if necessary to ensure the mixture is smooth. Pour into a glass and drink immediately.



MEDITATION FOR STRESS: DOES IT REALLY WORK?

Meditation has been sweeping the nation as the “in” way to destress, reduce anxiety and improve your mental health. But does it really work?

For many, the idea of meditation sounds a bit woo-woo, but there’s actually some surprising science behind it.

From reducing blood pressure to improving mental state of mind and emotional control, researchers are finding that meditation really is a simple solution to stress.

Benefits of meditation include:

- Reduced stress.
- Lower blood pressure.
- Lower levels of anxiety.
- Improved emotional health.
- Enhanced self-awareness.
- Lengthened attention span.
- Better memory.

But How Do You Do It?

The first thing to understand is that there are lots of different types of meditation from mindfulness meditation and spiritual meditation to movement meditation and progressive relaxation.

Each style of meditation has a different approach, but the underlying theory is the same; to use relaxation techniques to influence the function of the brain, reduce stress and increase alertness and mental function.

Like many things, meditation is a skill that must be practised. When you first start out it’s likely you’ll find it hard to relax and empty your mind. But as you practice you’ll learn how to relax faster and enter a deeper state of mind easily.

Most beginners find guided meditation the best way to start. You can find guided meditations on YouTube or you can download one of the many meditation apps like Headspace or Insight Timer.

Whether you’re stressed out or just looking to improve your mental focus, meditation is a quick, easy and affordable way to achieve your goals.



WORDSEARCH CHALLENGE

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STRESS
ANXIETY
AWARENESS
MEDITATION
STRETCHES
SPRING
SUNLIGHT
SMOOTHIE
ZINC
HEALTH

WHERE TO FIND US:

Care For Health

Fox House, Station Approach,
Godalming, GU7 1EU

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| Monday | 0720-1300 | 1340-1920 |
| Tuesday | 0720-1300 | 1340-1920 |
| Wednesday | Closed | 1340-1920 |
| Thursday | 0720-1300 | 1340-1920 |
| Friday | 1100-1300 | 1340-1800 |
| Saturday | 0900-1230 | Closed |
| Sunday | Closed | Closed |

STRESS VITAMINS

WHAT ARE THEY & WHERE TO FIND THEM

Magnesium is a mineral that's essential for bone health, hormone health and mental health too. Deficiencies are common in the western world, so it's important in time of stress to keep your magnesium levels adequate.

Magnesium can be found in nuts and seeds such as pumpkin seeds and cashews, leafy green vegetables and legumes.

Zinc is another mineral, essential for skin health, immune function and blood sugar regulation. Again, it's very common for the western diet to be low in zinc, so it's important to eat consciously to ensure a good zinc intake.

Zinc can be found in oysters, red meat and poultry as well as legumes, nuts and seeds. If you choose to supplement zinc or iron be sure to take them at separate times of the day as iron can block zinc absorption.

Iron is important for cardiovascular function and even a small deficiency can leave you feeling short of breath and extremely tired. Women are more likely to be low in this mineral than men, but around 33% of the population are thought to be deficient.

Iron can be found in red meat, beetroot, green leafy vegetables and fortified foods such as cereals.