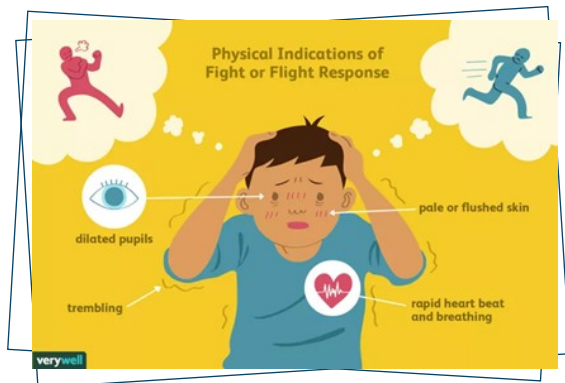


## Fight or Flight Response



The fight-or-flight response is a physiological reaction that happens when something is terrifying, either mentally or physically. The response is prompted by the release of certain hormones such as catecholamines, adrenaline and noradrenaline that prepare your body to either stay and deal with a threat or to run away to safety. This results in an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate. Once the threat is gone, it takes between 20 – 60 minutes for the body to return to homeostasis.

Some of the physical signs of the fight-or-flight response include:

- Rapid heartbeat and breathing
- Pale or flushed skin
- Dilated pupils
- Trembling

## Stress-Reducing Activities You Can Do at Home



### Quick Exercise

A quick bout of exercise is a great way to reduce your stress if you are feeling jittery or uneasy. Even if it is a set of 20 jumping jacks, 10 sit-ups, or running in place for 30 seconds, that little bit of activity gets your heart rate up and activates several neurotransmitters. These include dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine, which improve your mood and help eliminate anxiety and stress.



### Take a bath

Run a bath and relax. Changing your body temperature is like giving your body a full sensory slow down. To increase the calming sensation, add fragrant soap or some chill music.



### Stretch

You do not have to be a yoga expert to enjoy the benefits of this ancient practice. Just taking 10 minutes to breathe and stretch in any way that feels suitable to you can be calming. If you want to do some yoga without leaving the house, yoga apps are a great tool.



### Meditate

Meditation is another practice that often intimidates people but can be effective and relieving once you do it. With meditation, do not worry about anything but focusing on breathing. Slow breathing has proven effective in calming the central nervous and cardiovascular systems and belly breathing, specifically, may improve attention, mood, and levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

## References:

*How the fight or Flight Response Works.* The American Institute of Stress. (2019, August 21). Retrieved December 16, 2022, from <https://www.stress.org/how-the-fight-or-flight-response-works>

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This brochure is intended to promote healthy habits. It is not intended as a substitute for medical advice or professional care. Before making changes to your diet or exercise, consult your health care provider.



# STRESS



> Types, Response & Strategies for Relief!

## Stress

Stress is a common reaction the body has when changes happen, resulting in physical, emotional, and intellectual responses. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous.

Stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline. But when stress lasts for a long time, it could harm your health.

## Two Types of Stress:

**Acute stress.** This type of stress is short-term and quickly leaves. You can feel it briefly when you slam on your brakes suddenly or have a fight. This type of stress can assist you with managing dangerous situations or occur when you do something new or exciting. Everyone has acute stress at one time or another.

**Chronic stress.** This type of stress lasts longer. Chronic stress can be brought on by having money problems, an unhappy marriage, or trouble at work. If this type of stress stays constant, it may lead to health problems.



## How Does the Body Respond to Stress?

The autonomic nervous system controls your heart rate, breathing, vision changes and more. Its built-in stress response, the “fight-or-flight response,” helps the body face stressful situations.

When a person has long-term (chronic stress), continued activation of the stress response causes wear and tear on the body. As a result, physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms develop.

### Physical symptoms of stress:

- Aches and pains
- Chest pain or feeling like your heart is racing
- Exhaustion or trouble sleeping
- Headaches, dizziness or shaking
- High blood pressure
- Muscle tension or jaw clenching
- Stomach or digestive problems
- Trouble having sex
- Weak immune system

### Emotional and mental symptoms of stress:

- Anxiety or irritability
- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Sadness

### Unhealthy behaviors people with chronic stress engage in to try and manage their stress:

- Drinking alcohol too much or too often
- Gambling
- Overeating or developing an eating disorder
- Participating compulsively in sex, shopping, or internet browsing
- Smoking
- Using drugs

## How is Stress Diagnosed?

Stress is not something that can be measured with a test. The individual experiencing it is the only one who can determine how severe it is. When visiting your physician, they may have you complete a questionnaire to assist them with understanding your stress and how it is affecting you.



## Strategies for Stress Relief



It is impossible to avoid stress altogether but there are some strategies you can do to stop it from becoming overwhelming.

- ➔ **Exercise.** A short walk can improve your mood.
- ➔ **Reflection.** At the end of each day, take time to think about what you have accomplished instead of what you did not get done.
- ➔ **Set goals.** Arrange daily, weekly, and monthly goals. Focusing on goals will help you feel more in control of the moment and long-term tasks.
- ➔ **Talk to someone.** Think about talking to a therapist or healthcare provider about your concerns.

