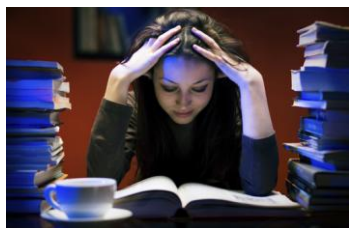


Stress-busting tips for mental stress



With everyone leading such busy lives, few people can honestly say that they don't regularly feel stressed to at least some degree. Stressors (events which cause stress) may include a death or illness in the family, exams, a boring job or unhappy relationship. Feeling stressed triggers the '**fight or flight**' or **stress response**, which has widespread physiological effects. In the days of old, a typical day may have involved deciding whether to fight a sabre-tooth tiger or to take

flight from it. When the stress response is triggered, various hormones are released to direct the body's energy towards fight or flight, including adrenalin from the nervous system and cortisol from the kidneys' adrenal glands.

Health implications of stress

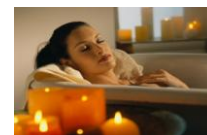
The stress response also signals the body to redirect energy and nutrients away from systems considered to be non-essential at that time for survival. Non-essential body systems include the digestive, urinary and reproductive systems. While this may be a useful short-term survival mechanism to focus your efforts on running away from a tiger, chronic (long term) stress leads to adverse health effects like poor nutrient absorption, constipation and infertility.

Chronic stress results in the release of large amounts of cortisol, which may lead to a state called adrenal fatigue. **Adrenal fatigue** occurs when the adrenal glands can simply no longer produce enough cortisol to meet your daily needs. Adrenal fatigue is increasingly common and results in general feelings of being tired and unwell, particularly fatigue which is not relieved by sleep.

Stress is a very **inflammatory** condition and has been linked to **cardiovascular disease** due to its adverse effects on the heart.

Reducing stress and the effects of stress

While it is often difficult to reduce the number of daily stressors we have in our lives, read on for **10 stress-busting diet & lifestyle tips** to help minimise stress and the impact it has on your body:



1. **Exercise More:** Nowadays 'stress' hormones don't usually get used up while fighting with or fleeing from tigers. While we can feel grateful for that, it is necessary to walk, swim, cycle or run off those stress hormones instead. As a bonus, you will also be producing some feel good endorphins while you're at it!
2. **Stop & Breathe:** Take time out from your busy week by slotting in a yoga or meditation class. Else, just stop for a moments and take in a few deep breaths. Relax your shoulders. Slow down.
3. **Take a bath:** Make yourself some aromatic bath oil by mixing 10-15 mL vegetable oil (e.g. almond or sunflower) with up to 8 drops of lavender, sandalwood, rose, geranium or your favourite essential oil. Light a candle, play some music and enjoy a relaxing aromatic bath.
4. **Have an aromatherapy massage:** massage has been shown to reduce the effects of stress including by reducing blood pressure, depression and tiredness. Relaxing essential oils such as lavender and sandalwood add to the therapeutic effects.
5. **Eat well:** Nourish the nervous system by including plenty of fresh, colourful fruits & vegetables and some good quality protein sources such as meat, eggs, legumes, nuts & seeds.
6. **Avoid stimulants:** lower your blood cortisol levels by reducing caffeine and other stimulants
7. **Write it down:** Reduce head 'chatter' by writing down your thoughts in a journal or safeguarding all those things you have to do on a task list.





8. **Prioritise:** you can only do so much in one day. Focus on doing what is most important.
9. **Sleep well:** aim for 7-8 hours a night to allow the body to repair and detoxify.
10. **Check adrenal function:** If you think you may be suffering from adrenal fatigue, consider having a saliva test to check adrenal hormone levels.

Stress-busting herbs & nutrients

Many **herbs and nutritional supplements** have useful therapeutic effects which can help to manage and reduce the effects of stress. These include:

- **Adrenal tonics** help to reduce the amount of cortisol which needs to be secreted by the adrenal glands e.g. licorice, rehmannia
- **Adaptogens** increase the body's resistance to stress when it can't be avoided e.g. siberian ginseng, withania & schisandra
- **Nervines** help to nourish the nervous system e.g. gotu kola, oats, skullcap and St John's wort as well as tryptophan and tyrosine which are used in neurotransmitter production.
- **Hypnotics** help to both induce and maintain sleep e.g. valerian, hops & passionflower
- **Liver support:** help the body to detoxify excess stress hormones e.g. St Mary's thistle, dandelion, rosemary, magnesium and B-vitamins



However, many other herbs and nutritional supplements are available. Ask your naturopath to advise which specific herbs and supplements can best meet your individual needs.

What will you do to manage your stress? Choose your favourite stress-busting tip and get started on improving your health today!

Jennifer Cochran
BHSc Naturopathy, Cert IV aromatherapy

PS. Note my special 'stress buster' offer for March/April: have an initial naturopath consultation before the end of April and receive a voucher for a **FREE relaxing 60 min aromatherapy massage***

**** Voucher valid for 2 months after initial consultation. Cannot be used in conjunction with any other special offer.***