

Free Clinic of the New River Valley

For Your Good Health

National Stress Awareness Month



Points of Interest:

- Tips for coping with stress
- Osteoporosis prevention
- How to get a full night's rest
- The benefits of healthy eating

You deal with it everyday—positive or negative, stress takes a toll on your body. April is National Stress Awareness Month, and health care providers across the country will be working to educate people about the dangers of stress and ways to cope.

The Health Resource Network, a national non-profit health education organization, started stress awareness month fifteen years ago.

There are many different types of stress and the conditions that it causes. We use the word to describe many problems and conflicts that we experience. When we feel panicked, we say we are *stressed*. When we have trouble making a decision, we claim to be *stressed*. When we

have no explanation for feeling tired and run-down, we blame it on *stress*.

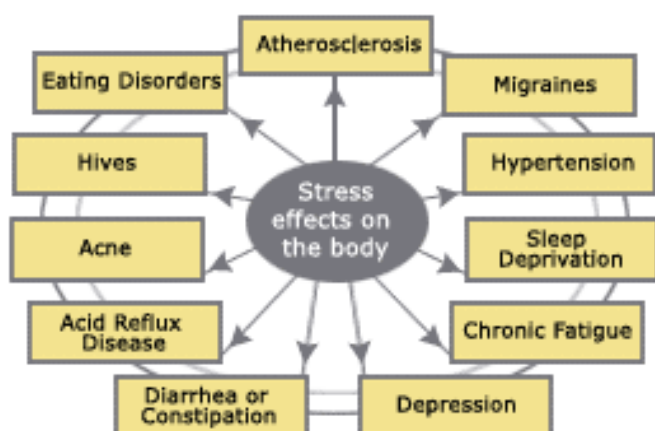
Overall, stress is defined as the normal wear and tear on our bodies. Stress happens when our bodies experience anything that demands us to alter or change our ability to cope.

The American Institute of Stress claims that stress is America's number one health problem. It estimates that at least 75% of all visits to the doctor's office are stress-related.

That's no surprise, considering that overwhelming stress can lead to sickness, high blood pressure, complication with diabetes, depression, and anxiety.

America's #1 Health Problem

Tips for coping with stress



The following suggestions can help you prevent or manage stress levels:

- Get enough sleep and exercise
- Make time for friends and family
- Recognize your limits
- When you feel angry or upset, take a deep breath
- Spend time outside—studies show that sunlight exposure increases feel-good chemicals in the brain
- Talk about what causes stress with your friends, family, or physician



Counting sheep?

If you're like most people, at the end of a long day all you want to do is crawl into bed and sleep away the hours. You look forward to laying your head on the pillow, finding your comfortable position, and closing your eyes to the stresses of the day. However, if you're like 27% of Americans, you rate your sleep quality as poor and you spend every day struggling to find the energy to make it through your daily tasks.

Poor sleep can lead to many health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and weight gain.

Sleep loss adds up over time. If you find yourself having trouble staying awake at work or when you are driving, you should talk to your health care provider. Poor sleep quality adds stress to your lifestyle, and stress can decrease your ability to cope with every day situations.

"If you are having problems sleeping, the best place to start looking for a solution is to have a thorough check-up with your physician."

—Helen Robinson, Nurse Practitioner at the Free Clinic

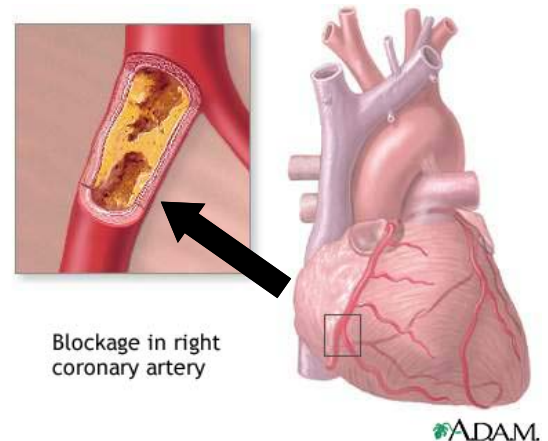
The following tips will help to maintain or improve a good night's rest:

- Create a sleep schedule. Your body works best with a routine. Try to go to sleep at the same time every night and wake up at the same time the next morning.
- Do not exercise or eat before sleep
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol at least 4-6 hours before bedtime
- Do not watch TV or read in bed

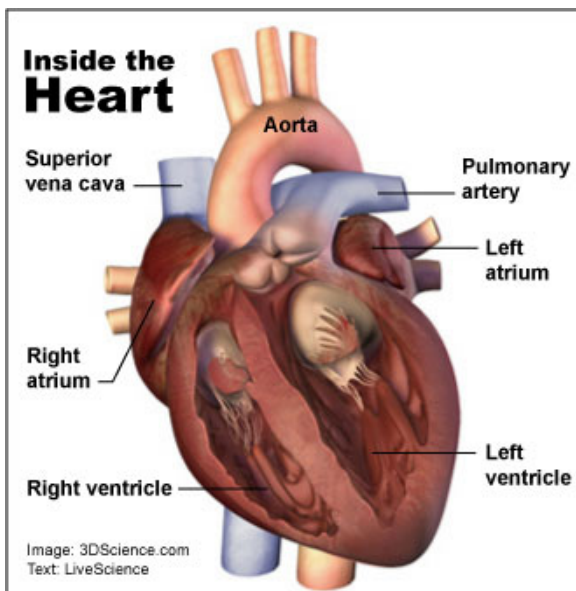
Heart disease prevention

The American Heart Association uses the term *heart disease* to describe a number of different conditions that affect the heart. Any condition that keeps the heart from functioning normally poses a significant health risk.

The most common cause of heart disease is narrowing or blockage of arteries. Arteries supply the heart with blood. As you can see from the picture on the right, cholesterol can build up inside an artery. This is yet another reason why it is important to eat healthy and make smart lifestyle choices. For more information about eating healthy, read the articles on the next page.



Blockage in right coronary artery



Tips for Heart Disease Prevention

- Don't smoke or use tobacco products.
- Get exercise. Regular, moderate physical activity can reduce the risk of fatal heart disease by 25 percent. Combining physical activity with other positive lifestyle habits, such as maintaining a health weight, can provide even more heart health benefits.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. Limit intake of saturated fats and trans fat.
- Watch your weight. Excess pounds can lead to an increase in the risk of heart disease.

Eating your way to a healthy lifestyle: It's easier than you think!

By choosing foods wisely, you can do a lot to promote your overall health. If you eat foods that are high in fiber and certain vitamins, and low in "bad" fats, for instance, you can reduce your cholesterol and heart attack risk and improve your blood pressure.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a healthy diet includes a moderate amount of fruits and vegetables. In fact, the FDA suggests that you follow its "five a day" guideline (eating five servings of fruit or vegetables a day).

To help you reach your five-a-day goal, you should try:

- Snacking on raw vegetables instead of potato chips
- Adding fruit to your cereal at breakfast
- Drinking juice instead of coffee or soda

Ask yourself this question: What can I eat today for a healthier tomorrow?

A heart-healthy diet includes:

- Fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods
- Little or no saturated fats and trans fats (found in fried foods such as French fries)
- Low levels of salt and little or no sugar

Eat your way to 5 a day!



The next time snack time comes around, grab a few of nature's fast foods instead of reaching for a bag of chips...

Original Fast Foods

Cherry tomatoes
Raisins
Apples
Oranges
Baby carrots
Grapes
Bananas
Dried Fruits

Osteoporosis Prevention

How can milk, sunlight, and exercise keep you strong? They can help in the prevention of osteoporosis. Osteoporosis can be prevented by adopting an exercise plan and healthy eating habits. Though it is important to start young, you are never too old to start thinking about prevention.

Exercise helps by increasing bone mass. Regular exercise helps strengthen bones and helps to prevent bone loss. Low-impact exercises such as walking and tennis are good activities for moderately active women.

A key ingredient in the recipe for bone loss prevention is enough calcium intake. Make it a point to eat dairy products, leafy green vegetables, nuts and seafood. Believe it or not, most women only get about half of the

calcium they need. Healthcare providers suggest that women take calcium supplements (found in most grocery stores) to ensure they receive the calcium they need.

Another key factor in osteoporosis prevention is Vitamin D, which can be found in most dairy products. The easiest way to jumpstart your body's Vitamin D production is to spend a few minutes outside. Sunlight is absorbed through the skin and increases Vitamin D production.

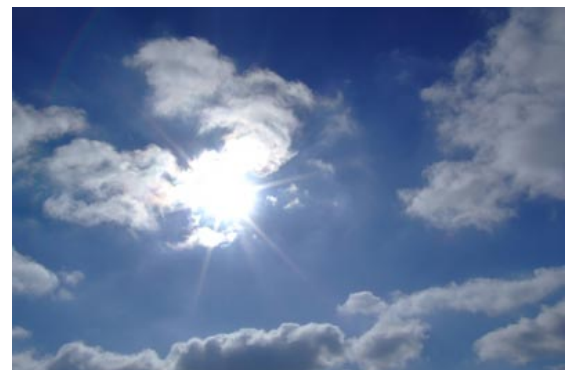
What is a serving size?

The National Institute of Cancer recommends the following as a serving size to help you reach your five-a-day goal:

- 1 medium fruit or 1/2 cup of small or cut-up fruit
- 3/4 cup of 100 percent juice
- 1/4 cup of dried fruit
- 1/2 cup raw or cooked vegetables
- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables (lettuce)
- 1/2 cup cooked beans or peas

As the weather gets warmer, spend a few minutes outside each day to strengthen your bones!

Information adapted from Women's Health Magazine
www.womenshealthmag.com



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The Free Clinic of the New River Valley is committed to providing quality healthcare and dental services to people who lack insurance and cannot afford healthcare.



www.nrvfreeclinic.org

