

Stress and Stress Management

Stress is the body's response to difficult or unexpected situations. Some people think of stress as an adult problem; however, people of all ages can feel stress. In fact, stress is a natural part of life. The way a person responds to a potentially stressful situation is what is important.

When you feel stress, your body secretes hormones. These hormones make your heart beat faster, your muscles tense, and your blood pressure rise. You breathe faster, you sweat, and you may feel slightly nauseated. This reaction, called "fight or flight," enables you to take control and handle the stressful situation. The "fight or flight" reaction lasts a short time and goes away when you are no longer stressed.

Sources of stress are called stressors and can be mental, physical, or social. An argument with a friend or a big test can both be stressors. The body may respond positively or negatively to such situations. Chronic stress, stress that lasts a long time or occurs frequently, is potentially damaging. Family problems, a difficult class at school, a schedule that is too busy, or a long illness can cause chronic stress. Symptoms of chronic stress include upset stomach, headache, backache, insomnia (inability to sleep), eating problems, anxiety, depression, or anger.

There are many ways to try to control chronic stress, including exercise, proper diet, time management, adequate rest, and participation in relaxing hobbies. Deep breathing exercises, journal writing, and humor are other effective ways to deal with stressful situations.

Define the following terms.

1. fight or flight reaction _____

2. stressors _____

3. chronic stress _____

4. Write about a time you experienced the fight or flight reaction to stress. How did you handle the situation?

5. What are some methods of controlling or reducing stress?
