Reducing Stress

How you handle stress makes a big difference in how you feel. It might even help your blood pressure, blood sugar level, and the rest of you. Use these calming strategies to stop stress ASAP.

Break Out the Bubble Gum
Next time you’re at the end of your rope, unwrap a stick of gum. According to studies, chewing gum lowers anxiety and eases stress. Some researchers think the rhythmic act of chewing may improve blood flow to your brain, while others believe the smell and taste help you relax.

Get Outside
Spending time outdoors, even close to home, is linked to better well-being. You’re in a natural setting, and you’re usually doing something active, like walking or hiking. Even a few minutes can make a difference in how you feel.

Smile Like You Mean It
Don’t roll your eyes the next time someone advises you to “grin and bear it.” In times of tension, keeping a smile on your face – especially a genuine smile that’s formed by the muscles around your eyes as well as your mouth – reduces your body’s stress responses, even if you don’t feel happy. Smiling also helps lower heart rates faster once your stressful situation ends.

Sniff Some Lavender
Certain scents like lavender or fresh mown grass may soothe. In one study, nurses who pinned small vials of lavender oil to their clothes felt their stress ease, while nurses who didn’t felt more stressed. Lavender may intensify the effect of some painkillers and anti-anxiety medications, so if you’re taking either, check with your doctor before use.

Relax and Refresh!
No matter how busy you are, take time to unwind. Relaxing can help you increase your energy level and prevent stress-related diseases. Find what works best for you – perhaps listening to music, laughing with friends, reading, meditation, getting a massage or doing yoga. You’ll know you’re on the right path when you start feeling calmer yet more energized.
Tune In!
Heading into a stressful situation? Music can help you calm down. In one study, people had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol when they listened to a recording of Latin choral music before doing something stressful (like doing math out loud or giving a speech) than when they listened to a recording of rippling water.

Reboot Your Breath
Feeling less stressed is as close as your next breath. Focusing on your breath curbs your body’s “fight or flight” reaction to pressure or fear, and it pulls your attention away from negative thoughts. Sit comfortably in a quiet place. Breathe in slowly through your nose, letting your chest and lower belly rise and your abdomen expand. Breathe out just as slowly, repeating a word or phrase that helps you relax. To reap the most benefit, repeat for at least 10 minutes.

Be Kind To Yourself
We all have a constant stream of thoughts running through our heads, and sometimes what we tell ourselves isn’t so nice. Staying positive and using compassionate self-talk will help you calm down and get a better grip on the situation. Talk to yourself in the same gentle, encouraging way you’d help a friend in need. “Everything will be OK,” for instance, or “I’ll figure out how to handle this.”

Write Your Stress Away
Jotting down your thoughts can be a great emotional outlet. Once they’re on paper, you can start working out a plan to resolve them. It doesn’t matter whether you prefer pen and notebook, a phone app, or a file on your laptop. The important thing is that you’re honest about your feelings.

Tell A Friend
When you’re feeling overwhelmed, seek out the company of a friend or loved one. Have a friend who’s dealing with the same worries as you? Even more reason to open up. You’ll both feel less alone.

Get Moving
When you work up a sweat, you improve your mood, clear your head, and take a break from whatever is stressing you out. Whether you like a long walk, yardwork or an intense workout at the gym, you’ll feel uplifted afterward.

Laugh Out Loud
Feeling stressed about work and family responsibilities? There are plenty of quick things you can do to reduce your tension. Throw a comedy into the DVD player, invite over some friends, and share a few good laughs. Every time you crack up, increased oxygen courses to your organs, blood flow increases, and stress evaporates. In fact, just thinking about having a good laugh is enough to lower your stress hormone levels.

Pet Your Dog
Your pet not only gives you unconditional love, but he’s also good for your health. When you pet your dog even for just a few minutes, your body releases feel-good brain chemicals like serotonin, prolactin, and oxytocin. At the same time, it decreases the amount of the damaging stress hormones that are released. That can mean lower blood pressure, less anxiety, and even a boost in immunity.

Clean The Clutter
Being surrounded by too much stuff can be overwhelming and contribute to stress. It brings on anxiety when you can’t find your checkbook, your child’s homework, or the utility bill. So de-clutter to de-stress. Tackle a drawer, a shelf, or a tabletop at a time. An uncluttered space can feel satisfying and restorative. As an added plus, spring cleaning is good exercise, burning more than 250 calories an hour.

Drink Some Orange Juice
The tart beverage that already may be a regular part of your morning routine could help you in surprising ways. Researchers say vitamin C may help people manage their stress more effectively, in part by lowering levels of stress hormones like cortisol. As an added bonus, vitamin C-rich foods such as orange juice, grapefruit juice, strawberries, or sweet red peppers can help boost your immune system.

Sing A Song
Turn up the radio in the car or start crooning in the shower. No matter how out of tune you are, singing can make you feel happier. Choral members who were surveyed said singing put them in a better mood and made them feel less stressed. Singing also can be good for your breathing and posture, as well as your heart and immune system.
HEALTHCARE CONSUMER SMARTS

Visit emergency rooms only in true emergencies. An urgent care center provides equivalent care in many cases for about one-third of the cost of an emergency room visit. You’ll likely experience less trauma and lower exposure to other diseases by visiting the urgent care center. In addition, your visit should be faster than the emergency room.

Food Smarts

Know your fats. Look for foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol to help reduce the risk of heart disease (5% DV or less is low, 20% DV or more is high). Keep total fat intake between 20% to 35% of calories.

Safety Smarts

With the warm weather comes a desire to shine and polish your home. But did you know that 90% of poisonings occur in the home? When warning labels are ignored or chemicals fall into the wrong hands, disaster can occur. Cleaners can burn skin, irritate eyes and cause respiratory harm, and formaldehyde, found in some air fresheners, is a highly toxic cancer-causing agent. Phenol, used to kill bacteria and fungi, is found in disinfectant and antiseptic products, mouthwashes and throat lozenges. Exposure to high amounts of phenol can cause burns, liver damage, irregular heart beat and death.

Foods From A to Z – “U” Foods

Ube – is a type of yam originating in the Asian tropics. Ube can be eaten boiled however it is most commonly used in desserts such as cakes, donuts and cookies. Ube is high in Vit A and C, fiber, potassium and antioxidants.

Ugli Fruit – is grown only in Jamaica and is a hybridization of a grapefruit, orange and tangerine. It is a low glycemic index fruit and contains 70% of your daily Vit C. Ugli is also high in Calcium, Vit A and fiber.

Ume Plums– are native to China and later introduced to Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Viet Nam. They are also known as Chinese Plums or Japanese Apricots. Usually used to flavor a variety of items or pickled and eaten as a snack, this fruit is very low in calories (3 calories per plum) and high in potassium, Vit A and fiber.
**Recipe of the Month**

**Fresh Vegetable Spring Rolls**

3 oz buckwheat soba noodles  
2 Tbls unsweetened & salt-free almond butter  
1 Tbls fresh lime juice  
1 Tbls rice vinegar  
½ tsp Sriracha  
½ tsp toasted sesame oil  
4 spring roll wrappers (8½-inch circles)  
1½ C mixed salad greens  
12 sugar snap peas, thinly sliced lengthwise  
1 cucumber, cut into 3-inch long thin strips  
1 carrot, cut into 3-inch long thin strips  
1 mango, cut into 3-inch long thin strips

Fill a medium saucepan with water; bring to a boil. Add noodles & cook according to the package directions. Drain, run under cold water to cool, & shake out excess water. Place in a medium bowl.

In a small bowl, whisk together the almond butter, lime juice, vinegar, Sriracha, and sesame oil. Whisk in 1-2 teaspoons of warm water if the dressing is too thick to pour. Pour over the noodles and toss well. Add the scallions and toss again.

Working one at a time, prepare the wrappers according to the package directions. Divide ingredients evenly, and, in the center of each wrapper, fill with the noodles, salad greens, snap peas, cucumber, carrot, and mango. Wrap and roll up like a burrito, slice each in half crosswise, and serve.

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**April Birthdays**

April 7 – Mari Moreno

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**April**

National Autism Awareness Month  
[www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

National Child Abuse Prevention Month  
[www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth](http://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth)

National Donate Life Month  
[www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov)

National Minority Health Month  
[www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov](http://www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov)

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**Run/Walk Events**

California Classic Half Marathon  
April 2 ~ Chuckchansi Park  
[www.halfmarathons.net](http://www.halfmarathons.net)

Milerton Lake Triathlon  
April 8 ~ Milerton Lake  
[www.sierracascades.com](http://www.sierracascades.com)

Color Me Rad  
April 23 ~ Woodward Park  
[http://www.colormerad.com/location/fresno](http://www.colormerad.com/location/fresno)

Shinzen Run/Walk  
April 30 ~ Woodward Park  
[www.runsignup.com/Race/Events/CA/Fresno//ShinzenRunWalk](http://www.runsignup.com/Race/Events/CA/Fresno//ShinzenRunWalk)

Color de Mayo Run  
May 6 ~ Huron  

Fresno Urban Run  
May 7 ~ Chuckchansi Park  
[https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/FresnoUrbanRun](https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/FresnoUrbanRun)

Mud N Blood Zombie Run  
May 21 ~ Hobb’s Grove  
[www.mudnbloodzombierun.com](http://www.mudnbloodzombierun.com)

Clovis Memorial Run  
May 27 ~ Clovis Senior Activity Center  

Foam Glow Run  
June 3 ~ Fresno Fairgrounds  