

# Managing Stress to Protect Your Health

Stress is a normal way our bodies react to the environment. Too much stress on your mind and body can make you feel worried, sad and ill, and add to risk for heart disease and stroke.

A lot of people think that stress is pressure from the outside, but it's not. Things like break-ups, deaths, schoolwork, vacations, and isolation are **stressors**. Your response to those situations is **stress**. You're in charge of your stress.



## What can stress look like?

- Feeling anxious, overwhelmed, nervous, on edge, sad or depressed
- Increased heart rate, sweating, and faster breathing than usual
- Headaches, chest pains
- Diarrhea, stomach problems
- Insomnia (not being able to sleep) or sleeping more than usual
- Increased substance use (alcohol and drugs)
- Feeling more tired than usual (fatigue)

## Tips for Managing stress



Exercise regularly and eat well



Practice “mindfulness,” actively paying attention to the present moment



Take a break from stressful situations with things like music, drawing, writing or walking



Reduce caffeine, alcohol and substances



Identify stressors and practice dealing with them calmly, communicating clearly



Spend quality time with loved ones who help you cope in a positive way



Get plenty of restful sleep ([more advice here](#))



Work on big problems by breaking them into smaller ones



Seek help when you are overwhelmed. Counselors and other mental health providers can be a great support

## Mindfulness Exercise to try when you're feeling stressed:

Five Senses: When you're feeling stressed, use this exercise to quickly ground yourself in the present. It only takes a moment.

- **What are 5 things you can see** that you hadn't noticed before?
- **What are 4 things you can feel** in or on your body?
- **What are 3 things you can hear** (like background sounds)?
- **What are 2 things you can smell?**
- **What is 1 thing you can taste?**

The numbers for each sense are only a guideline. Feel free to do more or less of each.

## Other Resources:

[CHAMindWell](#) is a FREE online mental wellness program for adult patients and staff at CHA. Free meditations (English, Spanish and Portuguese) linked here: [www.chacmc.org/audio](http://www.chacmc.org/audio).

[CHA Behavioral Health Urgent Care](#) offers 24 hour mental health support: Call 833-222-2030.

[Free Apps and Resources](#), featuring Breathe2Relax, an app with simple breathing exercises, stress tracking and information about stress.



Scan the QR code to learn more.