

# Health Beat

January 2018



## 7 ways to keep stress and blood pressure down

When it comes to preventing and treating high blood pressure, one often-overlooked strategy is managing stress. If you often find yourself tense and on-edge, try these seven strategies to reduce stress.

1. **Get enough sleep.** Inadequate or poor-quality sleep can negatively affect your mood, mental alertness, energy level, and physical health.
2. **Learn relaxation techniques.** Meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, deep breathing exercises, and yoga are powerful stress-busters.
3. **Strengthen your social network.** Connect with others by taking a class, joining an organization, or participating in a support group.
4. **Hone your time-management skills.** The more efficiently you can juggle work and family demands, the lower your stress level.
5. **Try to resolve stressful situations if you can.** Don't let stressful situations fester. Hold family problem-solving sessions and use negotiation skills at home and at work.
6. **Nurture yourself.** Treat yourself to a massage. Truly savor an experience: for example, eat slowly and really focus on the taste and sensations of each bite. Take a walk or a nap, or listen to your favorite music.
7. **Ask for help.** Don't be afraid to ask for help from your spouse, friends, and neighbors. If stress and anxiety persist, ask your doctor whether anti-anxiety medications could be helpful.

Add in a healthy lifestyle — maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, regular exercise, and a diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthful fats — and high blood pressure could be a thing of the past.

# How **STRESS** Affects

# The **BODY**

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## **SKIN**

skin problems like acne, psoriasis, eczema, dermatitis, random breakouts, and skin rashes

## **STOMACH**

can cause peptic ulcer disease, IBD, IBS, food allergies, stomach cramps, reflux, nausea and weight fluctuations

## **PANCREAS**

results in elevated secretions of insulin, which if chronic could lead to diabetes, damaged arteries and obesity

## **IMMUNE SYSTEM**

suppressed effectiveness of the immune system to battle and recover from illness. Leads to high levels of inflammation in the body, which causes a variety of chronic health conditions

## **HEAD**

issues with mood, anger, depression, irritability, lack of energy, concentration problems, anxiety and panic attacks

## **HEART**

increased blood pressure, fast heart beat, increased risk of heart attack and stroke, and higher cholesterol

## **INTESTINES**

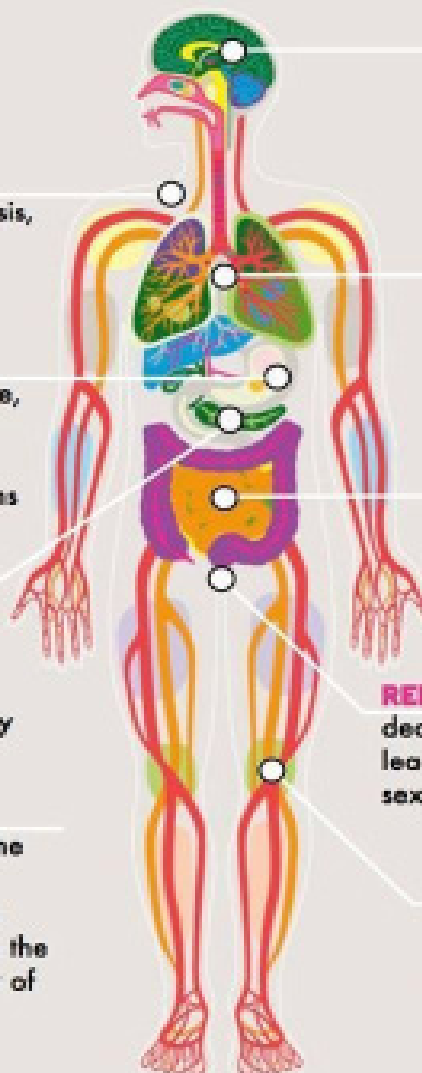
decreased nutrient absorption, reduced metabolism, decreased enzymatic output, increased risk for inflammatory bowel diseases, diabetes, and more

## **REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**

decreased testosterone and estradiol production leading to reduced fertility. Dampening of sexual behaviour and loss of sexual drive

## **JOINTS & MUSCLES**

aches and pains, inflammation, tension, lowered bone density (propensity for osteoporosis), tightness in the shoulders and back



## Daily Healthy Tip :

### Strengthen your core

Exercising your core-the muscles of your abdomen, back, and hips-improves balance and reduces the risk of falling. Start small by doing planks on a table: Stand in front of a table and lean over, resting your forearms on the tabletop. Keep your elbows directly below your shoulders while you keep your body straight from the feet to the neck. Hold the position for as long as you can.

## How to walk a dog in 5 easy steps

**Set your goal.** Dogs need to exercise at least once a day. A good rule of thumb is to walk a dog a minimum of two blocks for every 10 pounds of the dog's body weight.

**Chart your course.** Choose a walking route that's fun and safe for both you and your dog. Avoid busy roads if your dog is fearful around traffic. Also, climbing hills or traversing uneven terrain may be too challenging if you or your dog are out of shape or have physical limitations.

**Practice leash skills.** To make walking work as a form of exercise, teach your dog to heel on a leash, or you'll spend most of your time wrangling the dog and not getting up to walking speed.

**Design your regimen.** As with other aerobic activities, begin with a five- to 10-minute warm-up, then proceed to at least 10 minutes of brisk walking. Finish up with a five-minute cool-down period to let your heart rate return to normal.

**Cool off and check in.** Fill a water bowl after each outing so your dog can drink freely. Be aware of signs of overexertion in your dog, such as heavy panting, limping, or excessive sleeping.

Source: Harvard Medical School Special Health Report, Get Healthy, Get a Dog ([www.health.harvard.edu/DOG](http://www.health.harvard.edu/DOG))



## Wag more: A tale of healthy living



Canine companionship yields heartfelt benefits for many people!

Sometime around the Stone Age, a few docile wolves crept out of the woods to warm themselves by the human campfire. The rest, as they say, is history. Today, nearly half of U.S. households include at least one canine family member. For most owners, the responsibilities and costs are easily outweighed by the unmatched love and devotion that dogs can offer. Cuddly puppy pictures and gushy sentiments aside, can canine companionship make a real difference in your cardio-vascular health? According to Dr. Elizabeth Frates, assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, the answer is an emphatic “yes”—a conclusion backed by the American Heart Association’s 2013 scientific statement on the benefits of pet ownership.



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