

**Caffeine** - if your consumption of coffee and other drinks which contain caffeine is high, cut down.

**Nutrition** - eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Make sure you have a healthy and balanced diet.

**Time** - make sure you set aside some time each day just for yourself. Use that time to organize your life, relax, and pursue your own interests.

**Breathing** - there are some effective breathing techniques which will slow down your system and help you relax.

**Talk** - talk to your family, friends, work colleagues and your boss. Express your thoughts and worries.

**Seek professional help** - if the stress is affecting the way you function; go and see your doctor. Heightened stress for prolonged periods can be bad for your physical and mental health.

**Relaxation techniques** - meditation, massage, or yoga have been known to greatly help people with stress.

## Stress Management Techniques

Stress management can help you to either remove or change the source of stress, alter the way you view a stressful event, lower the impact that stress might have on your body, and teach you alternative ways of coping.

Self-help books or stress management courses are also helpful in learning stress management techniques. You can also seek the help of a counselor or psychotherapist for personal development or therapy sessions. In addition, therapies which help you relax, such as aromatherapy or reflexology, may be beneficial.

## Medicines

Doctors will not usually prescribe medications for coping with stress, unless the patient has an underlying illness, such as depression or some type of anxiety. If that is the case, the doctor is actually treating a mental illness. In such cases, an antidepressant may be prescribed. Bear in mind that there is a risk that all the medication will do is mask the stress, rather than help you deal and cope with it.

*To locate a physician who can help you manage stress, call Springhill Medical Center's Physician Referral line at (251) 460-5207.*

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*managing  
stress*

# Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms

## Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying

## Physical Symptoms

- Aches and pains
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds

## Emotional Symptoms

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness

## Behavioral Symptoms

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

## You can take steps to prevent stress in your life.

- Set realistic goals and limits for yourself.
- Put things into perspective and try not to get upset about insignificant or relatively unimportant matters.
- Take stress-management, time-management, or anger-management classes.
- Find activities that you enjoy and set aside time to participate in them on a regular basis.
- Participate in regular physical exercise.
- Consume a healthy diet.
- Maintain a positive outlook.
- Set goals and break them into easily achievable tasks.
- Reward yourself for the good things that you do each day.

## Treatment

There are three broad methods you can follow to treat stress, they include **self-help**, **self management**, and **medication**.

**Exercise** - exercise has been proven to have a beneficial effect on a person's mental and physical state. For many people exercise is an extremely effective stress buster.

**Division of labor** - try to delegate your responsibilities at work, or share them. If you make yourself indispensable the likelihood of your feeling highly stressed is significantly greater.

**Assertiveness** - don't say yes to everything. If you can't do something well, or if something is not your responsibility, try to seek ways of not agreeing to do it.

**Alcohol and drugs** - alcohol and drugs will not help you manage your stress better. Either stop consuming them completely, or cut down.

## Stress Statistics

Percent of people who regularly experience physical symptoms caused by stress	<b>77%</b>
Regularly experience psychological symptoms caused by stress	<b>73%</b>
Feel they are living with extreme stress	<b>33%</b>
Feel their stress has increased over the past five years	<b>48%</b>
Cited money and work as the leading cause of their stress	<b>76%</b>
Reported lying awake at night due to stress	<b>48%</b>

## Prevention

### Dealing with Stressful Situations: The Four **A**'s

#### Change the Situation:

**A**void the stressor.

**A**lter the stressor.

#### Change your reaction:

**A**dapt to the stressor.

**A**ccept the stressor.