

# wellnessNEWS

Ideas to help you *LIVE WELL* from the ENCANA WELLNESS CENTRE

## Introduction to stress

(Source: www.capitalhealth.ca)

Stress is an everyday fact of life and cannot be completely avoided. Thus, you need to learn to live with it in a healthy way. Some stress may be positive, as it stimulates you to meet life's challenges. However, when stress is constant or intense it can be unhealthy and lead to emotional and physical illness. Whether your stress experience is a result of major life changes, or a build-up of everyday worries, it's important to deal with it in a positive way.

## The Stress Response

(Source: www.capitalhealth.ca)

The stress response is the body's physical reaction to a stressful situation. You've probably heard it called the "fight or flight" response. In these situations the body releases a hormone called adrenaline that causes many physical changes: increased heart rate and blood pressure, increase in breathing rate, increased muscle tension, and increased cholesterol/fatty acid levels in the blood. All of these changes make it easier for the person to stay and "fight" or to run away ("flight") from the threat. When the stressful situation is over, your body relaxes and returns to a normal state.

The other response is a long-term "vigilance" response. Another hormone called cortisol is released to help the body prepare for survival. This hormone causes many things to happen in the body: gradual increase in blood pressure, release of fatty acids and clotting factors into the blood, decrease of sex hormones, increase of gastric acid in the stomach, and lowering of the body's immune system. As in the "fight or flight" response, the body returns to normal when the long-term stress is relieved.

## Did you know?

✿ 14.3% of MRC employees said that stress has affected their performance at work or cause them to miss time from work.

✿ The top 3 stresses reported by MRC staff:

lack of time (57%)  
work (53.4%)  
debt/money issues (35.7%)

## Coping with stress

(Source: www.cmha.ca)

Because each of us is different, there is no one "correct" way to cope with stress. However, there are a number of different things that can be done, and it is helpful to look at both short and long-term solutions to reducing stress.

✿ **Identify your problems.** Is your job, your relationships or money worries causing you stress? Are unimportant, surface problems masking real, deeper ones? Once you are fairly sure you know what the problem is, you can do something about it.

✿ **Solve your problems.** Start thinking about solutions. What can you do, and what will be the consequences? Do you need marriage counselling? Should you talk to a financial expert about money management? What will happen if you do nothing? If you follow this problem-solving strategy, you should be able to make some changes to take the pressure off yourself.

✿ **Talk about your problems.** You may find it helpful to talk about your stress. Friends and family members may not realize that you are having a hard time. Once they understand, they may be helpful in two ways: first, by just listening to you vent your feelings and second, by suggesting solutions to your problems.

✿ **Learn about stress management.** There are many helpful books, films, videos and courses to help you cope with stress. There are also counsellors who specialize in stress. There may also be courses and stress management workshops available in your community.

✿ **Reduce tension.** Physical activity can be a great stress reducer. Go for a walk, take up a sport, stretch, dig in the garden, clean the house. You may find it helpful to learn some relaxation exercises. These can be as simple as deep breathing - slowing inhale through your nose until you cannot take in any more air, and then exhale through your mouth.

✿ **Take your mind off your problems.** You may be able to get rid of stressful feelings temporarily by getting busy. If you get involved in hobbies, sports or work, you can give yourself a "mental holiday" from your stress. Not thinking about your problems for a while can give you a little mental distance from them and make them easier to solve later on.