

What is Stress?

Stress is a fact of daily life and is the result of both the good and bad things that happen to us. Too much stress can cause serious health concerns, but there are many ways of dealing with stress that can reduce your risk.

Signs that you are over-stressed include:

- Feelings of irritability, sadness or guilt
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Change in weight or appetite
- Difficulty in concentrating or making decisions
- Negative thinking
- Loss of interest, enjoyment or energy in something you used to enjoy
- Restlessness

Will I Get Better?

While some people may appear to thrive on it, stress is considered to be a risk factor for many diseases including:

- Heart disease
- Some types of bowel disease
- Herpes
- Mental illness

Severe stress can cause biochemical changes in the body,

affecting the immune system, leaving your body vulnerable to disease.

Because everyone is different, there is no one way to cope with stress, however, there are a number of approaches you can try to deal with short and long term stress:

- Identify your problems. What is causing your stress?
- Work on solutions. Start thinking about what you can do to relieve the problem.
- Talk about your problems. Friends, work colleagues and family members may not know you are having a hard time.
- Learn about stress management. In addition to health professionals who specialize in stress, there are many helpful books.
- Reduce tension. Physical activity is a great stress reducer.
- Take your mind off your problems; read, take up a hobby, get involved in sports.
- Try not to be too hard on yourself. Stress can cause lots of negative thinking.
- Find realistic solutions you can achieve in steps that will bring success.

Is There Anything I Can Do To Help Myself?

Once you have lowered your stress level, there are techniques that will help prevent it from building up again:

- Make decisions. Worrying about making a decision causes stress.
- Avoid putting things off. Make up a weekly schedule that includes leisure activities as well as things you must do.
- Delegate to others. Let others take on some of the tasks so that you are not trying to do everything yourself.
- Keep your thinking positive and realistic.

If you are having thoughts of suicide, tell your doctor and don't be afraid to use the 24 Hour Distress Line, 780-482-HELP (4357) or go to the hospital.

Resources...

Below are some additional resources you may find helpful:

Government of Canada: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/your-health/lifestyles

Get Healthy - Reduce Stress: www.heartandstroke.ca