

WAYS TO WELLNESS



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FOCUS ON: Stress Management

Happy spring from MCRD Health Promotions! I hope you enjoyed last month's edition of the newsletter, and I am very excited to bring you the second installment of Ways to Wellness - this month, we're talking about STRESS!

These days, most of us know stress all too well. You may define it as being out of time, suffering anxiety, sleepless nights, weight loss/gain, feeling frazzled, running late, or forgetfulness. But beyond hindering our quality of life, stress can also have a negative effect on our health! Consider the following statistics:

- 75 - 90% of all doctor's office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints
- Stress costs American industries more than \$300 billion annually
- The lifetime prevalence of an emotional disorder is more than 50%, often due to chronic, untreated stress reactions

HEALTHY HIGHLIGHT: Our Body's Response to Stress

"Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with *physical, mental, and behavioral* responses." Each of us gets stressed out by different things, and likewise, experience stress in different ways. Stress is a normal part of life, and can sometimes be a good thing! However, when we live in a constant state of stress or are unable to manage our stress effectively, it can have a negative effect on our jobs, our emotional well-being, our families, and our health.

Physical Responses to Stress. Physical symptoms

Continued on page 2.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FOCUS ON: Stress Management	1
HEALTHY HIGHLIGHT: Our Body's Response To Exercise	1-2
FIT TIP: Walk for Stress Relief	2
ASK MEGAN!	3
30 Days to De-Stress	4
HEALTHY HAPPENINGS	5

Spring can be a busy time for many families with spring sports, job transitions, the end of the school year, family vacations and other life events. Read on to learn some valuable tools to manage your stress to have a happy and healthy Spring!

Happy in health!

Megan Duesterhaus

MCRD Health Promotions Coordinator

of stress include tension headaches, back pain, jaw pain, heartburn, diarrhea, elevated blood pressure, sweaty palms, shortness of breath, rapid pulse, and upset stomachs. When acute stress (short-term stress) manifests into chronic stress (constant state of stress), these relatively minor symptoms can lead to *heart disease, obesity, ulcers, and impaired immune function.*

Emotional Responses to Stress. Our bodies don't just respond physically to stress. Stress can also take its toll on our thoughts and emotions. Emotional symptoms include anxiety, restlessness, worrying, irritability, depression, sadness, anger,

mood swings, job dissatisfaction, insecurity, confusion, burnout, forgetfulness, resentment, guilt, inability to concentrate, and pessimism.

Behavioral Responses to Stress. When we don't take the proper steps to manage our physical and emotional stress, the escalating tension can lead us to adopt negative and often damaging behaviors as a way to reduce our stress. Such behaviors include overeating, under-eating, angry outbursts, drug/alcohol abuse, social withdrawal, crying spells, relationship conflicts, and decreased productivity.

Lastly, don't just ignore excessive stress or accept it as part of your daily life. If you are experiencing any of these physical, emotional, or behavior symptoms of stress, you may have too many stressors in your life or have problems managing your stress. Check out the *Stress Less* column below for tips to help! If you aren't sure what is stressing you out or where to begin, there are many resources available to you! Check out the *Resources* box on page 3.

FIT TIP: Walk for Stress Relief

Exercise is a great stress reliever! Not only does it remove you from a stressful situation and allow you to blow off some steam, but it provides a healthy distraction, burns calories, and releases endorphins (your "feel good" hormones)! Even more, current research indicates that increasing your physical activity can lead to lower stress reactivity! Meaning? The more you exercise, the less phased you are by stressful situations!

So, if you find yourself with a looming deadline, a tense situation with a co-worker, or a nagging distraction, take a 15 minute invigorating walk break. You'll return to your desk/office/home rejuvenated and ready to face whatever is stressing you out!

Take a 2'o'Clock Walk Break!

Attention all MCRD Base personnel!
Join Megan and Giovanna from Health Promotions and Fitness for an invigorating mid-day walk break on Tuesday, April 7.

Put on some comfy shoes and meet at the flag pole (by the Parade Deck) at 1400.

Free exercise logs to all participants!



STRESS LESS!

1. **Take Inventory...**of what you think might be making you "stressed out."
 - Does anything in particular frustrate me, make me angry, or sad?
 - What do I worry about most?
 - Is something constantly on my mind?
2. **Find someone you trust** who will listen to you. Often, just talking to a friend or loved one is all that is needed to relieve stress or anxiety.
3. **Eat a well-balanced diet...**a poor diet places the body in a state of physical stress and a weakened immune system.
 - A nutritionally unbalanced eating pattern can result in not getting enough nutrients.
 - This form of physical stress decreases the ability to deal with emotional stress because malnutrition affects the way your brain processes information.
4. **Exercise regularly**
 - A consistent program of physical activity can contribute to a decrease in depression.
 - It improves the feeling of well-being.
5. **Balance work and rest**
 - People with no outside interests, hobbies, or means of relaxation may be unable to handle stressful situations because they have no outlet for stress.
6. **Have a positive attitude**
 - The attitude of an individual can influence whether a situation or emotion is stressful or not.



STRESS RESOURCES

Has your stress become too hard to manage? Don't fret! There are plenty of resources to help you out!

- ✓ Chaplain
- ✓ Family Healthcare Provider/Medical
- ✓ Family Advocacy (619.524.1200)
- ✓ Health Promotions (619.524.8913)

Got a Question for me?

Do I really have to count calories to lose weight? Why is resistance training so important? Can not getting enough sleep really make me gain weight?

Do you have a health or fitness question you've been wondering about? Email me at duesterhausmm@usmc-mccs.org and I will include your question in next month's newsletter!

ASK MEGAN!

Q: Can Stress Really Cause Weight Gain?

A: If you're a person who has tried to lose weight, you've probably been told to "relax" because added stress can stall your weight loss efforts and even cause weight gain!

The hormone Cortisol is usually attributed to the connection between stress and weight gain. Cortisol is a stress hormone responsible for our "flight or flight" reactions. When we need this type of quick-speed reaction, more fuel is made available and digestive processes shut down all in an effort to provide fuel to get away from an enemy. In our day-to-day stress, however, we aren't running for our lives! As we sit behind our desks working toward a deadline, we can't possibly use up all the fuel made available. This unused fuel can get stored as fat. Although this science sounds plausible, little research actually supports a solid connection between increased cortisol and weight gain. More well-established research demonstrates that it's not the stress-induced cortisol but our stress-induced bad habits that cause the extra pounds!

For example, when people are stressed, they tend to eat more and exercise less, which is the classic recipe for weight gain! Stressed out people also tend to sleep less, possibly lowering levels of leptin, a hormone that increases appetite!

To reduce the affect of stress on your weight-loss ambitions, it is imperative that you learn to manage your stress effectively and in a healthy way. (See the *Stress Less* column on page 2). If you tend to eat when you're stressed, spend a few minutes identifying healthier ways to cope. Massages, reading a book, spending time with loved ones, watching TV, or taking up a hobby will help you un-wind without adding on the pounds. Better yet, use exercise as double duty: a 45 minute exercise session not only will calm you down and help you focus, but up your calorie burn and lean muscle mass, ultimately helping you drop pounds!

30 Days to De-Stress Your Life!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">*adapted from www.sparkpeople.com</p>			<p>1 Reach out. Develop a network of friends and family who you can rely on and confide in. Call or visit them when you need to talk or vent. By sharing and listening, they will help you calm down.</p>	<p>2 Develop a mantra. Does a particular word, phrase or quote help you calm down and relax? Make it your mantra. Write it, think it, and repeat it any time you feel stressed, impatient, or anxious.</p>	<p>3 Just breathe. When a stressful situation arises, breathe in and out slowly and deeply for 10 full breaths. Exhaling slowly decreases your heart rate and calms the body, helping reduce stress.</p>	<p>4 Hold hands. A recent study found that handholding calms the body's reaction to stress. So grab the hand of a friend or loved one whether you're sitting on the couch or taking a walk.</p>
<p>5 Organize your life. De-stress your mind by decluttering. Clear off your desk, clean out your closet, utilize a planner and donate items you don't use. You'll be more relaxed and ready to tackle other issues.</p>	<p>6 Get a massage. A professional massage can provide soothing, deep relaxation. As the tense muscles relax, so does your entire body, as well as your overstressed mind.</p>	<p>7 Work up a sweat. Exercise is one of the best ways to de-stress. Pop in a workout video, hop on your bike or grab your jump rope. Picture the stress leaving your body through your pores, and let it go.</p>	<p>8 Sleep in. Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Staying well-rested keeps your mind (and body) healthy and better able to handle stressors. A good nap itself can even decrease tension!</p>	<p>9 Keep a journal. Expressing your feelings is a positive way to deal with stress, and journaling captures emotions as you experience them. Let it out, close the book, and get on with your day.</p>	<p>10 Don't multitask. With a lot to do in a little time, you might think it's efficient to multitask. Talk about stressful! He who chases two rabbits catches neither. Focus on one thing at a time for a better outcome.</p>	<p>11 Experience aromatherapy. Certain scents can evoke a calm state of mind. Known relaxants include lavender, chamomile, patchouli, rosemary and more. Try candles, incense, or air fresheners.</p>
<p>12 Try yoga. This form of exercise helps reconnect your mind and body in the present moment, decreasing stress and enhancing well-being. Try a class at a local studio, or a video in the privacy of your own home.</p>	<p>13 Plan something fun. Set aside time to participate in activities you enjoy on a regular basis. Plan a weekend trip, take a drawing class, or schedule a round of golf to take your mind off things.</p>	<p>14 Accept imperfection. Be realistic—no one is perfect. Don't be afraid to ask for help, and appreciate the outcome of your best efforts, even if it falls short of ideal.</p>	<p>15 Communicate openly. Holding in your thoughts and feelings about stressful situations like your work, relationships or parenting won't help you deal with stress or find solutions. Open up to a good friend.</p>	<p>16 Be proactive. When you feel overwhelmed, don't sit and stew about it. Solve problems by defining them, considering your goals, and developing a plan to reach them. It takes a lot of small steps to reach a big goal.</p>	<p>17 Play a game. You probably have a dozen stashed in your closet, waiting to be dusted off. A quick game of Candy Land, Shoots & Ladders, Connect Four, or even Twister is always good for a smile.</p>	<p>18 Take care. Experts agree that a healthy body is better apt to handle stress. Take care of yourself by exercising, eating healthy, drinking responsibly, avoiding drugs and getting regular health checkups.</p>
<p>19 Practice patience. When you're in a hurry, everything becomes urgent. Give yourself plenty of time to get things done. Think of that slow driver as a teacher, encouraging you to relax and be patient.</p>	<p>20 Put things in perspective. Most problems are easier to handle when you keep them in perspective and avoid making mountains out of molehills.</p>	<p>21 Meditate. When you meditate on a word, sound, symbol, or image, you develop mindfulness. This allows you to ignore distractions and engage in the present, helping relieve stress and enhance wellbeing.</p>	<p>22 Take a walk. Need a break from the office or hectic day at home? Slip out the door and let your feet take you somewhere. Walking will help you clear your head and relax. It's great aerobic exercise, too!</p>	<p>23 Give yourself a massage. Just like getting a professional massage, self-massage of your shoulders, neck, feet and other pressure points can reduce tension and stress. Simply rub your tension away.</p>	<p>24 Let go of the past. Research shows that those who ruminate a lot may have higher blood pressure, more stress hormones, and shorter life spans. For the sake of your health, forgive and forget.</p>	<p>25 Stop overplanning. If your calendar is full and you're a slave to your day planner, you might be overscheduled and overstretched. Cut out a few things so you spend your time doing what's important to you.</p>
<p>26 Say no to drugs and alcohol. Although these may seem to relieve tension, relying on them to cope will hurt your health and resilience. Find healthy ways to deal with stress and emotions.</p>	<p>27 Cry it out. Some experts believe crying is an important stress reliever. Perhaps that is why you feel better after a good cry. Instead of holding in those feelings, open the flood gates to release them.</p>	<p>28 Squeeze stress away. By squeezing a stress ball, you contract the muscles in your hand and arm. As you release, your muscles relax, reducing tension and relieving stress. Use it to take out your frustration.</p>	<p>29 De-stress your commute. Less driving means less road rage. Instead of stressing out in traffic, relax as you ride a bus or train, carpool (so you only drive sometimes), or bike to work (to release stress and endorphins).</p>	<p>30 Stay present. When stressing about the past or future, remind yourself to focus on what matters right now at this very moment. After all, there's no use in worrying about things you can't change.</p>		

HEALTHY HAPPENINGS: Spring Health and Fitness Events

We have some great events planned for the coming months! Mark your calendars now and keep an eye on my web calendar for more information, updates, and changes!

http://www.mccsmcrd.com/Calendars/Health_Promotions_Calendar.aspx

TWO-O-CLOCK WALK – April 7 @ 1400 – Parade Deck Flag Pole – Take a quick, mid-day walk break to celebrate National Start Walking Week! Join Megan and Giovanna from Health Promotions and Fitness for an invigorating 15 minute walk to relieve stress, re-energize, and increase productivity! We will have on-site sign-ups for Base Walking Groups! Free exercise logs for all participants. For more information, call Megan at 619.524-8913.

SLIMDOG MILLIONAIRE – May 2 – June 27 – Fitness Center – Get Healthy and Wealthy with MCCS's 8-week fitness program! Get ready to tighten your belt as we pay you to trim the fat! Each participant gets:

- 2 weekly small group training sessions with a personal trainer (total of 16 sessions!)
- Nutritional counseling
- Food and exercise journals
- Weight-loss motivation and strategies
- Body composition, RMR, and weight assessments
- Free baseball cap, t-shirt, and weekly incentive prizes

Kicks off Saturday, May 2nd with a Super Saturday Workout @ 0900-1100 for all participants. Group training starts May 4th.

Sign-Up online for a specific day/time.

Mondays/Wednesdays @ 0900-1000

Mondays/Wednesdays @ 1630-1730

Tuesday/Thursdays @ 0530-0630

Tuesdays/Thursdays @ 1630-1730

Call Megan (524.8913) or Giovanna (524.8465) for more information.



BUILDING BETTER HEALTH – May 13 @ 1000-1300 – MCRD Home Store Parking Lot – This year's Annual Health Fair will give you the tools to Build Better Health! Come on out to try some tasty food, participate in some fun fitness competitions, get your blood pressure and body fat checked, meet health and wellness vendors from all over San Diego, win free prizes, and more! Call Megan at 619.524.8913 for more information.



DON'T FORGET!

Did you participate in 4 of March's Nutrition events? Bring your 4 clovers to Megan (Bldg 5W) to turn them in to win your free copy of the Eat This Not That book!

