



# STRESS EFFECTS

## How Your Body Reacts to Stress

**S**tress is the response of your body to all demands made upon it. Understanding these demands and their effects can help you learn to recognize your own "stress response," as well as ways to counteract distress to lead a healthier life.

### The Basic Stress Response

Your body responds to all stress, both positive and negative, by trying to get back to normal. Depending on the stressor (whatever causes the stress response), hormones, like adrenalin, may surge. Your heartbeat and blood pressure will probably increase. Your blood sugar rises. These physical responses helped prehistoric humans survive by helping them run away faster or fight harder. By the time they were done, their bodies had discharged the tension of the moment and their stress response was followed by relaxation.

### Physical Effects

Today, we experience stressors which are very different from those early survival ones. Yet positive stressors such as getting married and negative stressors such as family conflicts still cause the same physiological fight or flight response.

If a stressful situation goes on for too long without any relief, you might experience diseases and disorders, such as colds, ulcers, asthma, heart attack or stroke. You may feel tired, irritable, depressed or anxious. You may have trouble with sleeping, eating (either too much or too little), drinking and smoking.

### The Mind-Body Connection

Your mind and body are connected. When your mind is healthy, your body can resist illness better. When your body is healthy, your feelings are more positive. During stressful times, take care of both for maximum health and satisfaction.

### Minimize the Effects

There are many ways to keep all the negative effects of different stressors to a minimum, including:

- Take time for yourself to relax each day.
- **Exercise regularly, after getting your doctor's okay.**
- Learn to "let go" of things which are outside of your control. Learn to adapt to changes.



- Learn to take action when you *can* make a difference.
- **Avoid excessive alcohol, caffeine, fats and sugar. Don't smoke.**

- Give your time to something or someone you believe in.

- **Go away for the week-end.**

