

# TEN QUICK TIPS

- 1 Get to know the early *physical* warning signs of stress:** rapid pulse, dry mouth, cold hands, unexpected perspiration.
- 2 Get to know the early *emotional* warning signs of stress:** irritability, frustration, fatigue, the blahs, being argumentative.
- 3 Isolate the source of your stress.** Associate the early warning signs of stress with the *source* of your stress.
- 4 Keep a journal of stressful events.** Make an entry every time you recognize a stress warning sign.
- 5 Look out for underlying causes of stress.** These include time pressure, relationship and financial problems.
- 6 Avoid predictable causes of stress.** Why not avoid nasty co-workers and rush hour traffic and long lines *if you can*.
- 7 Build your stress resistance.** Exercise, deep breathing, yoga, meditation make you more resilient to the stress you can't avoid.
- 8 Modify your response.** Stubbornly refuse to let little things bother you.
- 9 Don't mask stress symptoms.** Pills and prescriptions don't eliminate the *source* of your stress.
- 10 Redefine normal.** Recognize that feeling achy, tired and irritable much of the time is NOT normal. Feeling healthy and robust *is*.



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## 1 easy PAGE information guides

# Preventing Stress-related Dis-ease

*Why over-the-counter medications may not be the best solution for your stress-related problems.*



## What you need to know...

Generally speaking, when you feel hungry you eat, when you feel thirsty you drink, and when you feel tired you sleep. But what happens when you feel stressed? If you're like most people, you try to ignore the feeling until it goes away. Or perhaps you try to mask your symptoms by taking an aspirin, an antacid tablet, a sleeping pill, an antidepressant, a tranquilizer, or a drink.

But guess what? Masking the symptoms of stress hides the pain but it doesn't make your stress-related problems go away. Your kids keep on nagging you, your boss keeps on giving you more work than you can ever do, the line at the bank keeps on getting longer and the service keeps on getting slower. By the time you head for the medicine cabinet, you may be feeling the effects of stress in your shoulders, your forehead, your temples, and sometimes it's just an unexplainable knot in the pit of your stomach.

**The afternoon headache, the nightly battle to fall asleep, and the morning blahs are just a few examples of the kind of stress symptoms we put up with on a daily basis.** Even though we know this state of health couldn't possibly be normal we begin to define it as such by *the sheer amount of time we spend feeling this way.*

When a friend or loved-one notices our distress we casually dismiss our symptoms: "Oh it's nothing. I'm used to it." Once you hear yourself talking this way - whether you realize it or not - you're subtly committing yourself to a *lifetime* of sub-par health. This is the turning point where minor problems such as headache, backache, neck pain, muscle tension, stomachaches, and occasional sleeplessness gradually transform themselves into major stress-related disorders like migraine headaches, chronic back pain, digestive disorders,



insomnia, infertility and high blood pressure. This is the point where your discomfort turns into dis-ease.

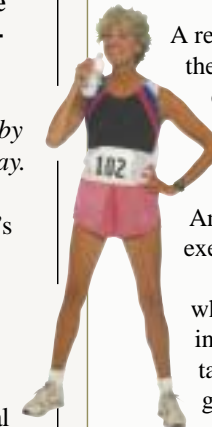
We have deliberately hyphenated the word dis-ease in this brochure to make an important point. Perhaps, if we spent *more* time mastering the art of lowering stress and feeling genuinely *at-ease* (as opposed to the false sense of ease brought about by taking over-the-counter medications) we would spend *less* time struggling with dis-ease.

**This year Americans will spend billions of dollars on over-the-counter medications for stress-related dis-ease.** This approach works fine when your stress is temporary. But when it isn't - you may need to consider other solutions. This brochure will show you an alternative to medicating your symptoms away. It will give you the tools and techniques to tackle stress naturally. It will show you how to get to the root of stress-related problems. And once you know the source of your stress, you can often eliminate it without resorting to help from your medicine cabinet.

### Exercise is as effective as an antidepressant.

A recent study at Duke University compared the use of Zoloft™ vs. exercise in treating depression. 156 patients who had been diagnosed with depression were split into groups. One group exercised for half an hour per day, three times a week. Another group took Zoloft and didn't exercise.

After four months almost 60% of patients who exercised showed a significant reduction in symptoms compared with 66% for those taking the medication. But the exercise group fared better in the long run: Only 8% of this group (compared to 38% of the Zoloft group) had a recurrence of symptoms when checked again at 10 months.



# What you might ask...

## Why shouldn't I take over-the-counter medication to mask my stress symptoms?

There is nothing wrong with taking an aspirin, or an antacid or a sleeping pill occasionally. Especially if your stress is temporary. But when you take these medications on a regular basis (not only do you get dependent on them) it's like putting a piece of masking tape over a warning light on the dashboard of your car. You're just covering up the problem. When you ignore a warning signal such as pain or muscle tension long enough, the problem often becomes worse.

## I always thought ulcers were a stress-related disorder. Now I hear they're not. Is that true?

It was once believed that ulcers were often caused by stress. Now doctors have discovered that ulcers are caused by a virus and can be treated quite simply with antibiotics. However, since stress can adversely affect your immune system, it is possible that this virus - which is always present in your digestive tract - gets the upper hand when your immunity is compromised by stress.

## My doctor thinks my migraine headaches are caused by a food allergy or PMS. I think they might be caused by stress. Who is right?

It's hard to say. The trickiest thing about diagnosing stress is that it's difficult to determine how much stress will cause a problem and exactly what that problem will be when it occurs. When you touch poison ivy and get a rash - that's specific cause with a specific effect. But excessive stress can cause any number of different effects from a rash to a migraine headache. This makes it very hard for your doctor to pinpoint stress as the cause of any illness without a lot of help from you.

## Lately I've had occasional bouts of insomnia but the sleeping pills I take make me groggy all the next day. What can I do?

Sometimes the side effect of taking a pill is worse than the problem itself. This is one more reason why you want to tackle stress-related problems naturally if you possibly can. Here are two suggestions: 1. Exercise for half an hour, three days per week. Our bodies crave exercise and when you do it on a regular basis chances are you'll fall asleep more easily. 2. The next time you're up in the middle of the night try meditating or listening to a relaxation tape on a Walkman.

## My doctor suggested an over-the-counter antacid for my morning bouts of indigestion. Are you saying I should ignore my doctor's advice?

No. But most patients want a simple solution to their health problems and most doctors feel *obliged* to provide one. Prescribing an over-the-counter solution such as an antacid is just about as simple as it gets. Plus, if your problem is stress-related, it's almost impossible for your doctor, given time constraints, to determine what the true source of your stress might be - *but you can!* So take the antacid for now but try to identify the source of your stress. If you notice, for example, that you only need the antacid on the mornings you meet with a particular client you're halfway to solving your stomach problems - *permanently*. Keep zeroing in on the source of your discomfort until you find out exactly what is causing it.



# What you can do...

This article will show you how to manage stress naturally and ultimately reduce your need for over-the-counter medications.

## Notice your physical warning signs.

A quickening pulse, a pounding heart, tight muscles, dry mouth, unexpected perspiration, and cold hands are all ways that your body lets you know you are experiencing stress. You probably won't notice your pupils dilating, your reproductive, digestive and immune systems shutting down, and your blood pressure rising but these symptoms of stress may be occurring too.

**Recognize the emotional warning signs.** Feeling annoyed, frustrated, irritable, anxious, defensive, depressed, and preoccupied are all examples of what happens to you *emotionally* when you experience stress.

**Isolate the source of your stress.** As you get better at noticing these warning signs when they *first* occur, you will begin to associate them with the *source* of your stress. You may notice tension in your shoulders when you drive, you may feel a grinding in your stomach before your weekly staff meeting, or you may feel your head aching after a difficult encounter with your boss. You may notice yourself getting in more arguments with your spouse, or an anxious feeling when you're around a particular person or you may notice that certain tasks seem much more difficult than they once were. Making the connection between a stress source and a stress symptom is the first step toward preventing stress-related *dis-ease*.

**Eliminate or avoid certain stress.** Once you see what the stressor (your source of stress) is you can eliminate or avoid it. Maybe you don't have to take the freeway home from work during the *peak* of rush hour. Maybe you don't have to interact with that annoying co-worker every day. Maybe you can do your banking on Tuesdays when the lines are usually shorter.



**Enhance your coping skills.** Sometimes you can reduce your stress by building up your stress-coping skills. Exercise, deep breathing, meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation all reduce stress and *increase your ability to cope*.

**Control your reaction.** Sometimes you can reduce stress by modifying your reaction to it. You can simply decide not to let something bother you, and chances are it won't.

**Keep a stress journal.** Many people are aided by keeping a journal of stressful events. Anytime you feel the least bit stressed jot down a short note. You can fill in the details later when you make an entry in your stress journal: "I felt angry while waiting in line at the bank. I was annoyed when my computer crashed and I couldn't figure out what was wrong with it. I felt my pulse race a bit when I was about to phone an important client. I felt my heart pounding after my boss asked to see me in his office even though it turned out to be nothing." After a week or two of making entries like these you may notice some patterns starting to emerge.

For example, you may discover that you felt stressed while waiting in long lines, or with a particular person, or when you were driving. You may see that stress strikes you hardest on days when you're running late, or when you've had a fight with your spouse or kids. Your stress journal not only helps you identify the obvious causes of stress, it also helps you uncover the underlying causes as well. Time pressure, financial difficulties, relationship problems, and living in a neighborhood with a high crime rate are all examples of underlying causes of stress.

**Assume control.** Of the things we've suggested above, *do what works for you*. Don't let your stress symptoms persist unchecked until you are strapped with a stress related *dis-ease*. *Anything* you decide to do will help you feel more in control of your life and considerably less stressed.