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Surviving Work Stress

by Lisa Cannon

**Your stressful job could be making you ill.
Find out how to heal.**



In our career-driven society, work can be an ever-present source of pressure. Whether it's caused by office politics, job dissatisfaction, workload, low pay, or co-worker conflicts, it can take a toll on your mind and body. In fact, 75 percent of health problems in the U.S. are stress-related, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Take a look at these common stress-related illnesses, and find out what you can do to alleviate the symptoms.

Heart Disease and High Blood Pressure: A Carnegie Mellon University study links chronic workplace stress to cardiovascular illnesses such as coronary heart disease, which can lead to serious cardiac events. Other studies show a link between stress and high blood pressure. If you smoke, quit. Your risk of heart attack will go down, and you'll lower your blood pressure. Also, eat a high-fiber diet that's low in saturated fat and cholesterol, maintain a healthy weight and exercise regularly. Keep an eye on your cholesterol levels as well.

Gastrointestinal Problems: Stress is a problem that's often felt in the gut. Excessive, prolonged strain can irritate the large intestine and cause diarrhea, constipation, cramping and bloating. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS, or spastic colon) is strongly linked to stress. In addition, stress may predispose you to ulcers.

To alleviate the symptoms of IBS, try eating a variety of foods, and avoid anything that's high in fat. Drink plenty of water, and consider eating five or six smaller meals a day rather than three large ones. As for ulcers, don't smoke, and limit your intake of caffeine and alcohol. You may also want to avoid aspirin, ibuprofen and spicy foods.

Headaches, Muscle Pain and Joint Pain: Stress can trigger migraines and other tension headaches. Some research indicates that headache sufferers may be biologically predisposed to turn stress into muscle contractions. Many people also tense up their neck, jaw, shoulders and back under pressure, causing prolonged joint and muscle pain. Learn to recognize the signs of an onset early, and keep migraine medications with you. Track your headache triggers (like food, hormones, work stress, or even changes in the weather), and avoid them when possible.

For migraines as well as muscle and joint pain, massage and acupuncture can provide relief. Stretching can help back pain, and hot baths can soothe aching muscles.

Problems With Eating, Drinking and Drugs: Some people crave salt, fat and sugar when dealing with chronic tension, leading them to pack on pounds. Others lose weight or develop eating disorders. Stress can even trigger a hyperactive thyroid gland, which stimulates the appetite but causes the body to burn calories faster than normal. And many develop substance abuse problems, using alcohol and drugs to dull the pain of a stressful job.

If you eat too much, don't eat enough, or consume unhealthy foods when the pressure's on, you may want to keep track of what you eat and when. Does a daily meeting lead you straight to the doughnut box? Tracking your habits can help you take steps toward eating healthier snacks—or exercising—instead of heading for the pastries. Support groups and trained therapists can help with eating disorders and substance abuse issues.

Trouble Sleeping: Stress often leads to sleep loss—in fact, it may be the No. 1 cause of short-term insomnia. Stress also affects certain hormone levels in the body. High levels of these hormones can make it very hard to get shut-eye. Short-term solutions like sleeping pills can be problematic for the long term, and should only be used under a doctor's care. There are many sleep strategies out there, but remember, the only cure for stress-related insomnia is reducing the pressure you're under.

Following a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and making time for relaxation are the keys to wellness. Meditation and yoga are great ways to get a handle on pressure, as are deep-breathing exercises, relaxation tapes and soothing music. If nothing helps, you may want to change the way you live and work. Talk to your doctor to find out if your health problem is stress-related, and to get more options for managing stress.

Join one of myRegence.com's Healthy Living Programs to get personalized stress-relief tips.

Lisa Cannon has been a writer and editor for nearly 20 years. She contributes articles for myRegence.com on everything from natural insect repellants to mold allergies to sexual health. She lives in beautiful Portland, Ore.



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The Whole Truth About Whole Grains

by Tselani Richmond

Everything listed here (except for rye and barley) is generally gluten-free as well! However, if you are gluten intolerant, be careful with oatmeal. Sometimes oats are contaminated with wheat during processing.

Shopping Tips

When shopping for whole-grain products at the grocery store, you need to be careful: Certain brands of bread may sound like they contain whole grains, but they may not. Watch out for labels such as “multigrain,” “health nut,” or “made with whole grains.” Unless the package or ingredients list says 100 percent whole wheat or 100 percent whole grain, you could be getting refined grains.

As I was strolling through the grocery store aisles today, I noticed many products containing whole grains. Cereals made by General Mills are often whole grain. Yes, even Cocoa Puffs and Cookie Crisp are made with whole-grain corn (and a whole lot of artificial ingredients). Uncle Ben’s now makes instant whole-grain brown rice. You can also buy whole-grain pasta, like Barilla Plus. Wheat Thins contain very few whole grains, but Triscuits contain 100 percent whole-wheat flour, oil, and salt. I love foods with only three ingredients on the label!

Cooking With Whole Grains

The Whole Grains Council website has a great collection of recipes, and good advice for cooking with whole grains (www.wholegrainscouncil.org/). I’ve also included a whole-grain cookie recipe to help you get started.

Reduced risk of stroke. Reduced type II diabetes. Reduced heart disease. Better weight management. With all the health benefits of whole grains, why not stop by the grocery store tonight and pick up some heart-healthy choices?

Get more cooking tips from Tselani on myRegence.com’s “Ask the Chef” message board.

A graduate of Le Cordon Bleu, **Tselani Richmond** demonstrates her recipes each month in myRegence.com’s Cooking With Tse video segments.

Everyone knows that whole grains are good for you, but just how do you cook with them?

Growing up, my mom made sure we ate lots of whole grains: whole wheat bread, brown rice, and oats. But once I moved out and could make my own decisions, I opted for white bread, lots of pasta, and white crackers. I actually thought things made with white flour tasted better than those made with whole grains.

Recently, I’ve changed my tune. I’ve started replacing all my white-grain carbohydrates with whole grains. Not only does it help reduce the risk of heart disease and lower my cholesterol, but it makes me feel fuller faster. When I eat whole grains, I’m more satisfied and actually eat less.

What Is a Whole Grain?

A whole grain is a seed that is harvested and processed to retain the bran (outer shell), germ (nourishment), and endosperm (the starchy interior). Refined grains, such as white flour, remove the bran and germs, leaving the endosperm. While the center of the grain has lots of carbohydrates and protein, it’s missing valuable antioxidants, fiber, and vitamins. That’s why you see a lot of enriched flours in ingredients lists—manufacturers are trying to put back some of the nutrients that were there in the first place.

How Do I Find Whole Grains?

I used to think whole grains were only found in whole-wheat flour. But the following are whole grains as well:

- Cornmeal
- Brown and wild rice
- Barley
- Oatmeal
- Quinoa
- Rye
- Popcorn
- Buckwheat

Whole Wheat **Chocolate-Chip Cookies**

by Tselani Richmond

My mom makes these for me as a special treat. She altered the recipe to include whole wheat flour and reduced the sugar by half. She also cut the recipe in half so I don’t eat too many!

- 1 1/8 cups whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 egg
- 6 ounces chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Combine flour, baking soda, and salt in a bowl. In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine butter, brown sugar, and vanilla extract. Using the paddle attachment, beat until creamy and fluffy. Beat in egg. Gradually add the dry ingredients and mix well. Stir in chocolate chips and nuts. Drop by spoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from baking sheet and let cool on a wire rack.

Healthy cookies? Yes, it’s true.

And they taste great, too.





10 Ways to Cut 100 Calories

by Lila S. Ojeda

Want to lose 10 pounds? Start by cutting 100 calories a day.

If you eat the same amount of calories as you burn, you will maintain your body weight. To lose weight, you must eat less or move more. Sound intimidating? Start by taking small steps. A hundred calories a day is equivalent to about 10 pounds a year. So, assuming you're maintaining your weight, if you do nothing but cut 100 calories each day, you could lose 10 pounds. Here are 10 easy ways to cut 100 calories a day:

1. Replace one cup of milk, juice or soda with water. You may be consuming more than 100 calories of liquid, which usually does not fill you up as much as food.
2. Do you eat ice cream after dinner? Replace it with a piece of fresh fruit. Gain on fiber, lose on fat and calories.
3. Leave some food on your plate. A few bites left throughout the day could add up to more than 100 calories.
4. Replace your morning latte or mocha with black coffee and a splash of milk or soymilk. Or, order your coffee drink with nonfat or soymilk to save on calories.
5. Use nonstick cooking spray instead of oil or butter for cooking. Cooking spray is just finely misted oil and water. Remember, just one tablespoon of oil contains about 120 calories.
6. Switch to nonfat or low-fat dairy products: milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, ice cream, etc.
7. Eat a large salad before dinner to help reduce the calories of your overall meal, taking into account the added calories of the salad. Add lots of vegetables and fruits to your salad—they all have different, great nutrients.
8. If you use salad dressing, switch to vinegars such as balsamic or rice vinegar. They taste so good that you won't miss the dressing, and you'll save on calories. Look for flavored ones for an extra treat, like raspberry balsamic.
9. Eat a healthy snack between meals so that you can eat less at lunch and dinner, which are often too big. Choose healthy snacks like fruit, yogurt and nuts.
10. Walk more. On average, walking 1 mile will burn 100 calories. You're not actually "cutting" from your diet, but you're adding one great activity to your life. You don't have to do all your walking at once; try taking two 10- to 15-minute walk breaks.

Take the myRegence.com Health Risk Assessment to see if you need to cut calories.

Lila S. Ojeda, MS, RD, LD, CSCS, runs a private practice called LO Solutions in Lake Oswego, Ore. She provides nutrition articles and podcasts for myRegence.com.

8 Ways to Control Portions

by Lila S. Ojeda

Portions these days are bigger than ever, and unfortunately so are our waistlines.

Some restaurant portions are double or triple the size they were in the '70s, which makes for portion distortion when eating at home. Here are eight ways to help you control portions.

1. Learn some basic serving sizes. Keep in mind that this doesn't have to be all you get at mealtime. It's an exercise in learning portions, so that you can create a reasonably sized meal.
 - 1 serving meat = 3 oz (size of deck of cards)
 - 1 serving of cheese = 1 oz (size of a die)
 - 1 serving cooked pasta and rice = 1/2 cup (half a tennis ball)
 - 1 serving bread = 1 slice (FYI: a bagel is 4 servings!)
2. Make your main dish a side dish. Fill your plate primarily with salad and veggies, and take a small serving of your main dish.
3. Break down leftovers right away. Split leftovers up in small containers. This will allow you to have the right amount of servings in each so you're not tempted to "just eat the rest" from one big container.
4. Out of sight, out of mind. Break down those leftovers before you even sit down to your meal. Then you won't be tempted to go back for seconds or thirds.
5. Master mini meals. With all those great leftovers pre-portioned out for the week, you can learn how to master eating small, frequent meals throughout the day. This prevents overindulging at one meal and helps keep your energy and mood stable.
6. When dining out, ask for a box right away. You can even ask your server to box up half your meal before it comes out. Depending on the restaurant's portion sizes, you might even need to box up two-thirds of your meal.
7. Stay away from buffets. Buffets are not your friend! We feel like we want to get our money's worth and end up overeating.
8. Learn to say "No, thank you." When someone asks, "Will you have a pastry with your coffee?" or "Would you like the bigger size for just 50 cents more?" simply say, "No, thank you." If your host offers seconds, say: "I loved it but I just can't eat another bite. If there's extra, can I take some home with me and enjoy it tomorrow?" Then they won't feel offended that you didn't have seconds.



Walking for Weight Loss

by Kelly Constant

How to get the most bang from your daily walk.

Walking is a great form of exercise to increase overall health and wellness.

Just like with any form of exercise, however, intensity is a key factor in weight loss. It's useful to consider Perceived Rate of Exertion when you are walking to lose weight. You should be able to speak, but unable to sing a song.

Perspiration is also a key indicator of intensity, as is a detectable increase in your heart rate. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the way you feel when you are sitting and 10 being the way you feel when you sprint, you want to keep your intensity around a 7. If walking is not giving you the intensity you're looking for, there are a number of things you can try.

1. Focus on contracting your abdominals and your glutes while you walk. If you can focus on your body, you are likely to use more muscle groups intensely, thereby enhancing your results.
2. Use your arms. As your arms move upward past your heart, your body has to work harder to supply all of its parts with blood and oxygen, thereby increasing the intensity of your workout. This means that if the intensity of any workout is too high, you can bring your arms down below your heart to get yourself back to a more comfortable place.
3. Integrate cardio intervals or strength training intervals. An example of a cardio interval might be 30 seconds of jumping jacks, and an example of a strength training interval might be 30 seconds of walking lunges. Intervals will not only increase intensity, but the variety will decrease the boredom factor.

Read about more weight control and exercise in the [Health Encyclopedia section of myRegence.com](#).

Kelly Constant is a certified personal trainer, licensed massage therapist and wellness coordinator. You can find her fitness tips on [myRegence.com](#).

Make Fitness a Family Affair

by Margaret H. Evans

With childhood obesity on the rise, why not exercise your kids' right to get and stay fit?

For some people, fitness is a hit-or-miss proposition. For the Mabey family of Bountiful, Utah, it's a part-time job.

Fred and Jeri Mabey, along with teenage son Chris, are competitive triathletes who train for 10 to 12 hours a week. Chris began competing in kids' triathlons when he was 12. Jeri and Fred eventually decided to compete as well. Now the family has participated in close to 20 triathlons together.

"It's been a really good thing for our family," Jeri Mabey says, "especially because when you have teenagers, there are not that many things that you can do together that you all enjoy."

Pursuing Common Interests

Mom Nancy Parode says: "As a family, we're working on developing shared fitness interests. We're all preparing for biking experiences. A family friend recently acquired several horses and has offered riding lessons. We plan to try this new sport and see if it's something we'd like to do as a family." Parode also supports her children's interest in things like archery, ice skating and Irish dance.

Adjusting Your Goals

Your life changes when you have children, but it doesn't mean that exercise has to go out the window.

"I was always very fit and active," says Adam Goldthorp, whose children are 4 and 2, "but becoming a dad really slowed me down. I have now managed to invent a few sports and adapt some games so the kids get entertained—and I get my exercise." As part of his field hockey warm-ups, he'll kick and throw balls to his children and run past them, making noises that have them squealing with delight.

A Place for Everyone

Many cities have family fitness centers, where there are activities for parents and children. Carla Burke's family has joined a family gym in their town. This mom of two can drop her children in the kids' fitness area, where they can work out, and wear themselves out, while she does her exercise routine.

"We go three to four times a week and sometimes more in the summer. We are members for life, so as the children grow, our fitness routines will change."

Keeping It Simple

Getting fit as a family doesn't have to be a major undertaking or even cost money. When weather permits, you and your children can get your exercise just by taking a walk or biking after dinner.

Karen Spring, mom of 4-year-old twins, says she and her husband have always tried to incorporate their sons into their fitness routines. She power-walks, pulling her boys in a wagon at the same time. Sometimes the kids will get out and run or walk alongside her. When they get tired, they can hop back in the wagon.

"As a parent, I feel that encouraging fitness activities is a gift we give our kids for life," Spring says. "It's so much better to be out taking a brisk walk or kicking around a soccer ball than being a couch potato."

Keep track of your family's medical history with the [myRegence.com Personal Health Record](#).

Freelance writer **Margaret H. Evans** lives in Bountiful, Utah, with her husband and four children. She writes articles on a variety of health and wellness topics for [myRegence.com](#).



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