

# Health And Well-Being

## Staying Healthy in Stressful Times

(NAPS)—You may be feeling stressed during these challenging times, but stress can affect your physical and emotional health. Learn how to manage your stress so that you can stay healthy and cope with life's challenges.

### What is stress?

Stress is how your brain and body respond to a challenge. Any type of challenge—such as performance at work or school, a significant life change, or a traumatic event—can be stressful.

Your body reacts to stress by releasing hormones. These hormones make your brain more alert, cause your muscles to tense, and increase your pulse. In the short term, these reactions are good because they can help you handle the situation causing stress. This is your body's way of protecting itself. However, too much stress all at once or over time (chronic stress) can threaten your health.

Everyone experiences stress from time to time, but your response to stress may be different. Some people may experience headaches or an upset stomach. Others may get muscle aches or chest pain. Stress can also disturb your sleep, reducing your energy and making it tough to keep active when awake. In addition, stress can lead to weight loss or weight gain. Over time, stress can contribute to serious health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other illnesses, including mental disorders such as depression or anxiety.

### Managing stress through fitness, healthy eating, and relaxing activities

Regular physical activity, healthy food and beverages, and other positive activities may help you relieve stress and stay on track with improving your health.

Physical activity may help you start feeling better right away. It can help boost your mood and improve your sleep. In addition, physical activity adds to strength and stamina, which can help you manage stressful situations.

Physical activity doesn't have to mean long workouts. Short workouts, such



### **You don't have to let stress get you down.**

as a set of sit-ups or stretches, can help relieve stress. Try adding a new activity to your daily routine, such as walking around the block or up and down stairs a few times. Partner with a friend or neighbor to help you stay on track.

Consuming healthy meals, beverages, and snacks in moderation can be another way to protect yourself against stress. Preparing or purchasing foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables, low-fat proteins, and foods without added sugars or fats can give you energy and keep you feeling good.

Learn to recognize what triggers your stress response and identify ways to help you manage it. Other ways to help you manage stress may be to meditate, engage in your favorite hobby, limit your time on social media, volunteer, or connect with people who can provide emotional support.

Visit the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases website to learn more about physical activity, healthy eating, adequate sleep, and other behaviors to help you manage your stress. Visit the National Institute of Mental Health website to learn more about stress.