



Helpful Articles

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7 ways to keep stress—and blood pressure—down

Healthbeat

When it comes to preventing and treating high blood pressure, one often overlooked strategy is managing stress. If you often find yourself tense and on edge, try these seven strategies to reduce stress.

1. **Get enough sleep.** Inadequate or poor quality sleep can negatively affect your mood, mental alertness, energy level, and physical health.
2. **Learn relaxation techniques.** Meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, deep breathing exercises, and yoga are powerful stress-busters.
3. **Strengthen your social network.** Connect with others by taking a class, joining an organization, or participating in a support group.
4. **Hone your time-management skills.** The more efficiently you can juggle work and family demands, the lower your stress level.
5. **Try to resolve stressful situations if you can.** Don't let stressful situations fester. Hold family problem-solving sessions and use negotiation skills at home and at work.
6. **Nurture yourself.** Treat yourself to a massage. Truly savor an experience: for example, eat slowly and really focusing on the taste and sensations of each bite. Take a walk or a nap or listen to your favorite music.

Ask for help. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your spouse, friends, and neighbors. If stress and anxiety persist, ask your doctor whether anti-anxiety medications could be helpful. Add in a healthy lifestyle — maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, regular exercise, and a diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthful fats — and high blood pressure could be a thing of the past.

Positive Psychology

There is power in positive thinking. Positive emotions are linked with better health, longer life, and greater well-being. On the other hand, chronic anger, worry, and hostility increase the risk of developing heart disease.

For some people, being happy comes naturally and easily. Others need to work at it. How does one go about becoming happier? That's where positive psychology comes in. This relatively new field of research has been exploring how people and institutions can support the quest for increased satisfaction and meaning. It has uncovered several routes to happiness:

- **Feeling good:** seeking pleasurable emotions and sensations
- **Engaging fully:** pursuing goals and activities that engage you fully
- **Doing good:** searching for meaning outside yourself
- **Gratitude:** expressing appreciation for what you have in your life
- **Savoring pleasure:** placing your attention on pleasure as it occurs and consciously enjoying the experience as it unfolds
- **Being mindful:** focusing your attention on what is happening at the moment and accepting it without judgment

Self-compassion: consoling yourself as needed, taking the time to nurture yourself, and building the motivation to try again.



Variously known as the July 4th has been a fed-

1941, but the tradition of Independence Day celebrations goes back to the 18th century and the American Revolution (1775-83). In June 1776, representatives of the 13 colonies then fighting in the revolutionary struggle weighed a resolution that would declare their independence from Great Britain. On July 2nd, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence, and two days later its delegates adopted the Declaration of Independence, a historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson. From 1776 until the present day, July 4th has been celebrated as the birth of American independence, with typical festivities ranging from fireworks, parades and concerts to more casual family gatherings and barbecues

Fourth of July and Independence Day, eral holiday in the United States since



What type of mattress is best for people with low back pain?

Healthbeat

Back pain is one of the top reasons that people begin to lose mobility in middle age. Pain can keep people from engaging in physical activity, making it more difficult for them to maintain a healthy weight and keep up their strength, stamina, and balance as they age. So treating and managing back pain that results from injuries or health problems is crucial for staying on the path of a healthy and active life.

Considering that most people spend roughly a third of their lives lying in bed, choosing the right mattress is essential for managing low back pain. It can make the difference in whether you can sleep at night and function the next day.

In the past, doctors often recommended very firm mattresses. But one study, based on a waiting-room survey of 268 people with low back pain, found that those who slept on orthopedic (very hard) mattresses had the poorest sleep quality. There was no difference in sleep quality between those who used medium-firm and firm mattresses.

Soft mattresses, on the other hand, can also be problematic. While a soft mattress that conforms to your body's natural curves may help the joints align favorably, you might also sink in so deeply that your joints twist and become painful during the night.

If you want to find out whether a firmer mattress would feel better than the one you're currently using, try putting a plywood board under your mattress to dampen the movement from the bed-springs, or try placing your mattress on the floor.

Of course, you can also go to a mattress showroom and test a variety of models. But keep in mind that what feels comfortable for a few minutes in a store might not translate into a good night's sleep. A more reliable test is to observe how you feel after sleeping on different types of mattresses while away from home — for example, at a hotel or a friend or relative's house.

Prostate Health & Disease

The prostate gland has an important job: it produces a thick, milky-white fluid that becomes part of the semen, the liquid ejaculated during sexual activity. The gland isn't big—about the size of a walnut or golf ball—but its location virtually guarantees problems if something goes awry. The prostate gland is located just below the bladder and in front of the rectum. It also wraps around the upper part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the body. That means prostate problems can affect urination and sexual function.

The prostate is prone to three main conditions:

Prostatitis: infection or inflammation of the prostate. Prostatitis can cause burning or painful urination, the urgent need to urinate, trouble urinating, difficult or painful ejaculation, and pain in the area between the scrotum and rectum (known as the perineum) or in the lower back.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia: aging-related enlargement of the prostate gland. Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) can make the prostate compress the urethra and slow or even stop the flow of urine, in much the same way that bending a garden hose chokes off the flow of water. BPH affects about three-quarters of men over age 60.

Prostate cancer: the growth of cancerous cells inside the prostate, which may break out of the gland and affect other parts of the body. In the United States, about 1 man in 7 will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime. It occurs mainly in older men.

Surprising Sources Of Pain

It's an old joke: "Doctor, it hurts when I lift my left arm over my head!" "Well then, don't do that!" The causes of pain aren't always obvious. Consider these unexpected sources:

- **Back pain.** Taking your vitamins? Chronic back pain can be caused by low levels of vitamin D. Another possibility: constipation caused by blockage in the colon. Eat more fruits, vegetables, and fiber for better digestion. (Source: Prevention magazine)
- **Achy feet.** Wearing sandals or flip-flops can cause pain in your feet, ankles and knees due to poor arch support. (Source: the Web MD website)
- **Headache.** Cheese may be the culprit. A substance called tyramine in cheese can trigger headaches. Also, low blood sugar can create a headache even before you realize you're hungry. A snack like whole-grain crackers with peanut butter can bring quick relief. (Source: the Web MD website)