

STRESS MANAGEMENT

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BODY'S BUILT-IN SURVIVAL SYSTEM

*Stress is not always the problem.
Remaining stressed for too long can be.*



WHAT IS STRESS?

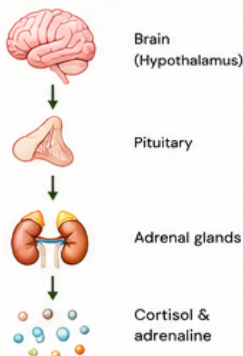
Stress is your body's natural response to challenge. In short bursts it can be helpful. It helps us:

- ✓ React quickly
- ✓ Focus attention
- ✓ Increase energy
- ✓ Respond to danger

The problem occurs when stress becomes chronic. The body begins treating everyday life as an emergency.

YOUR STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM

The HPA Axis



WHAT HAPPENS DURING STRESS?

Your body prepares for survival:

- ✓ Heart rate increases
- ✓ Blood pressure rises
- ✓ Blood sugar rises
- ✓ Digestion slows
- ✓ Immune function changes
- ✓ Sleep can become disrupted



DID YOU KNOW?

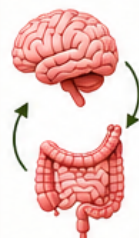
Your brain cannot always tell the difference between:

- Running from danger
- Financial worries
- Relationship stress
- Work pressure
- Constant notifications

Your body often responds in a similar way.



STRESS & THE GUT



The gut and brain communicate constantly.

- Chronic stress may:
- Alter gut motility
 - Increase digestive symptoms
 - Affect gut bacteria
 - Influence inflammation

This helps explain why stress can affect digestion.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your body produces cortisol every day – even when healthy. Cortisol is not a “bad” hormone. It helps regulate energy, blood sugar, immunity and the sleep-wake cycle.



HOW TO CALM THE STRESS RESPONSE



MOVE YOUR BODY

Movement helps use up stress hormones.

Examples:

- ✓ Walking
- ✓ Cycling
- ✓ Strength training
- ✓ Gardening
- ✓ Dancing



SLEEP IS MEDICINE

Poor sleep increases cortisol.
Aim for:

- ✓ Consistent bedtime
- ✓ Dark room
- ✓ Morning daylight
- ✓ Reduced evening screen exposure
- ✓ Caffeine cut-off earlier in the day



NOURISH YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

Foods to focus on:

MAGNESIUM-RICH FOODS



- Pumpkin seeds
- Almonds
- Spinach
- Beans

PROTEIN-RICH FOODS



- Eggs
- Fish
- Greek yoghurt
- Lentils

OMEGA-3 FATS



- Sardines
- Mackerel
- Salmon
- Walnuts



NATURE'S STRESS RELIEVERS



Research suggests time in nature may:

- ✓ Lower cortisol
- ✓ Improve mood
- ✓ Reduce blood pressure
- ✓ Improve sleep quality

Even 20 minutes can help.



BREATHING: YOUR BUILT-IN STRESS TOOL

Simple and powerful.

4-6 BREATHING



Breathe in for 4 seconds



Breathe out for 6 seconds

Repeat for 2-5 minutes.

Longer exhalations help activate the parasympathetic nervous system.

Sometimes called:
“Rest and Digest”



THE STRESS BUCKET



Every stressor fills the bucket.

DID YOU KNOW?

When your stress bucket overflows, your body stays in “survival mode”, which can affect every system in your body.



REMEMBER

You do not need to remove all stress from your life.

You simply need enough recovery to balance it.

Small daily habits repeated consistently can help calm the nervous system, improve resilience and support long-term health.



Morning daylight



Eat regular balanced meals



Move daily



Spend time outside



Connect with people



Prioritise sleep



Reduce unnecessary commitments



Practice self-compassion



DID YOU KNOW?

Laughter, social connection and spending time with loved ones can measurably reduce stress hormones.



DID YOU KNOW?

Just one poor night's sleep can temporarily reduce insulin sensitivity the following day.



DID YOU KNOW?

Mindfulness practices may change the brain's response to stress over time.

