

UC BENEFITS/HEALTH & WELLNESS NEWSLETTER



Keep checking the H & W website for updates on offers, events & NEW challenges!

www.utica.edu/hr/wellness

APRIL IS STRESS AWARENESS MONTH...SO LET'S TALK ABOUT STRESS

Information Courtesy of Excellus BC/BS

Job stress comes in different forms and affects your mind and body in different ways. Small things can make you feel stressed, such as a copy machine that never seems to work when you need it or phones that won't quit ringing. Major stress comes from having too much or not enough work or doing work that doesn't satisfy you. Conflicts with your boss, coworkers, or customers are other major causes of stress.

It's normal to have some stress. Stress releases hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and give you a burst of energy. Stress can be useful when you need to focus on or finish a big project. But too much stress or being under stress for too long isn't good for you. Constant stress can make you more likely to get sick more often. It can also lead to long-term health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, back problems, and depression. Look for these signs of job stress:

Headaches • Trouble sleeping • Problems concentrating • Short temper • Upset stomach



What Causes Job Stress?

Most of the time, it's the major sources of stress that lead to job burnout and health problems. Job stress can affect your home life too. Here are some common sources of major job stress:

Lack of control. Feeling as if you have no control over your work or job duties is the biggest cause of job stress. People who feel like they have no control at work are most likely to get stress-related illnesses.

Increased responsibility. Taking on extra duties in your job is stressful. You can get more stressed if you have too much work to do and you can't say no to new tasks.

Job satisfaction and performance. Do you take pride in your job? If your job isn't meaningful, you may find it stressful. Are you worried about doing well at work? Feeling insecure about job performance is a major source of stress for many people.

Uncertainty about work roles. Being unsure about your duties, how your job might be changing, or the goals of your department or company can lead to stress. If you report to more than one boss, juggling the demands of different managers can also be stressful.

Poor communication. Tension on the job often comes from poor communication. Being unable to talk about your needs, concerns, and frustrations can create stress.

Lack of support. Lack of support from your boss or coworkers makes it harder to solve other problems at work that are causing stress for you.

Poor working conditions. Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions, such as crowding, noise, or ergonomic problems, can cause stress.

Delta Dental:
Group Number: 10898
Division Number: 00001
Member Services: 1-800-932-0783

Excellus Member Service:
CDHP: 1-800-499-1275
PPO: 1-800-765-5226
Medicare: 1-866-846-8643
Primemail: 1-866-260-0487

**Human Resource
Directions (Employee
Assistance Program):**
315-525-1370

Bank of Utica:
797-2700

From the Office of Human Resources

What to Do About Job Stress

You can reduce some job stress by learning how to manage your time and your job duties. Think about the kinds of events that trigger stress for you at work. Then you can focus on one or two things you can do that will help the most to reduce stress. Here are some ideas:

Meet with your manager at least once a year (every 3 or 6 months is even better) to talk about your job and your performance. If a performance review is already part of your job, treat it as a chance to clear up issues that may be causing stress for you. Here are some questions to ask:

- What is expected of me in this job?
- Where is this company going? How do I fit into that plan?
- How am I doing? What are my strengths? How can I improve?
- What can I expect from you if there's a problem with my work or my job?
- If I continue to do well, how and when can I expect to be rewarded?



Get organized. Keep track of your projects and deadlines by making a list of what's urgent. Decide what matters most and what can wait.

Don't put things off. Use a schedule planner to plan your day or week. Just seeing on paper that there is time to get each task done can help you get to work. Break a large project into small steps, and set a deadline for each one.

Learn to say "no." Don't overcommit yourself. If you take on too much, you're creating stress.

Focus. Do one thing at a time. In some cases, you can do two things at a time. But if you start to feel stressed, go back to doing one thing at a time.

Concentrate. Try to limit distractions and interruptions. Ask others to give you a block of time when you are not disturbed.

Delegate. Ask someone else to take on a task. It's not always important to have all the control.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Make time for you. Leave your job at the office, even if your office is a room in your home. Leave your cell phone at work if you can, or decide not to answer it during times you've set aside for you and your family. Don't check work e-mail at home.

Be realistic. Remember that everyone has good days and bad days at work.

Reward yourself. When you finish a difficult task, celebrate. Enjoy a snack at your desk, or—if your job permits—take a short walk or visit with a coworker.

Schedule time for fun. If you spend every second of your day getting things done, you may resent never having time for yourself. If your employer offers a flexible work schedule, use it in a way that fits your work style. Go into work earlier and take a longer break at lunch to make time for a yoga class or a walk.



Practice breathing and relaxation techniques. You can do these at home or in a quiet place at work.

REMEMBER You can order a Healthy FX takeout dinner from Sodexo—Why cook? Call Damian: 792-3178

Setting a Goal to Reduce Job Stress

First, **identify what's creating stress** at work. Maybe it's lack of control over your job. Or maybe it's worry about losing your job or how you are doing at work. You might feel stress because you're unable to express your thoughts and ideas to your boss and coworkers.

Think about **why you want to reduce stress** at work. You might want to protect your heart and your health by reducing stress. Or maybe you simply want to enjoy your life more and not let work stress control how you feel. Your reason for wanting to change is important. If your reason comes from you- and not someone else- it will be easier for you to make a healthy change for good.

Next, **set a goal** for yourself that involves reducing your stress level. Think about both a long-term and a short-term goal.

**Don't forget about our
Employee Assistance Program**



Stress Journal You may not know what is causing your stress, exactly how your body responds to stress, or how you cope with stress. To find out, use a notebook journal to keep track of each time you feel stressed. Write down:

- What may have triggered the stress. Guess if you aren't sure.
- How you felt and behaved in response to the stressful situation (symptoms of stress)
- What, if anything, you did to cope with the stressful situation.

Journal last revised: 4/20/11

Author: Healthwise Staff

Medical review: Kathleen Romito, MD—Family Medicine & Lisa Weinstock, MD—Psychiatry

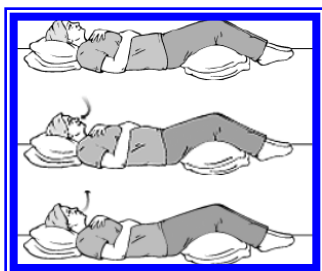
Time	Stressful event	Reactions (symptoms, thoughts, behaviors)	Coping response
SAMPLE			

Look over your notes to learn how often you are feeling stressed and how you are coping.

Ask yourself which ways of coping with stress work best and which don't work or have other effects you do not like.

The more notes you take, the more you can learn about your stress patterns. Keeping the journal for 1 to 2 weeks is best, although taking notes for even 1 or 2 days can be helpful.

The way you breathe affects your whole body. Full, deep breathing is a good way to reduce tension, feel relaxed, and reduce stress.



Roll breathing

The object of roll breathing is to develop full use of your lungs and get in touch with the rhythm of your breathing. It can be practiced in any position, but it is best to learn it lying on your back, with your knees bent.

1. Place your left hand on your abdomen and your right hand on your chest. Notice how your hands move as you breathe in and out.
2. Practice filling your lower lungs by breathing so that your left hand goes up when you inhale and your right hand remains still. Always inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
3. When you have filled and emptied your lower lungs 8 to 10 times, add the second step to your breathing: Inhale first into your lower lungs as before, and then continue inhaling into your upper chest. As you do so, your right hand will rise and your left hand will fall a little as your abdomen falls.
4. As you exhale slowly through your mouth, make a quiet, whooshing sound as first your left hand and then your right hand falls. As you exhale, feel the tension leaving your body as you become more and more relaxed.
5. Practice breathing in and out in this manner for 3 to 5 minutes. Notice that the movement of your abdomen and chest is like rolling waves rising and falling in a rhythmic motion.

Practice roll breathing daily for several weeks until you can do it almost anywhere, providing you with an instant relaxation tool any time you need one.

Caution: Some people get dizzy the first few times they try roll breathing. If you begin to hyperventilate or become lightheaded, slow your breathing. Get up slowly.

STRESS IN CHILDREN

It is important to recognize stress in children and teens and help them find healthy coping strategies. The strategies they learn often stay with them into adulthood.

Generally, anything that may cause children fear and anxiety can cause stress. This can include being away from home, starting a new school or moving to a new location, being separated from parents or caregivers, worrying about school and getting along with others, worrying about their changing bodies, and worrying about the future.

The following are some common signs of stress in different age groups.

Signs of stress in children and teens Preschool and toddlers	Elementary-age children	Preteens and teens
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anger• Anxiety• Eating and sleeping problems, including nightmares• Fear of being alone• Being cranky• Going back to infant behaviors• Trembling with fright• Uncontrollable crying• Withdrawal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being distrustful• Complaining of headaches or stomachaches• Feeling unloved• Having no appetite• Having trouble sleeping• Needing to urinate frequently• Not caring about school or friendship• Acting withdrawn• Worrying about the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anger• Disappointment with life• Distrust of the world• Low self-esteem• Stomachaches and headaches• Rebellion

After you have read the information in this newsletter, you will be ready to help your child with stress.

Talk to your doctor

If you have questions about this information, print it out and take it with you when you visit your doctor. You may want to mark areas or make notes in the margins where you have questions.

Adults can help children and teens with stress in many ways. Three important things you can do are to:

- Try to reduce the amount of stress in your lives.
- Help them build positive coping skills.
- Teach them to let stress out.

Reduce the amount of stress in your lives

- **Acknowledge your child's feelings.** When children seem sad or scared, for example, tell them you notice they are sad or scared.
- **Develop trust,** and let your child know that mistakes are learning experiences.
- **Be supportive,** and praise your child.
- **Show love,** warmth, and care. Hug your child often.
- **Have clear expectations** without being too strict. Let your child know that cooperation is more important than competition.
- **Don't over-schedule your child** into too many activities.
- **Be aware** of what your child wants (not just what you want).

Build positive coping skills

It is important to help children learn positive coping skills. These skills are often carried into adult life.

- **Provide a good example.** Keep calm, and control your anger. Think through plans to decrease stress, and share them with the family.
- **Teach them about consequences.** Children need to learn about the consequences—good and bad—of their actions. For example, if they do all of their chores on time, they will get their allowance. If they break another child's toy, they must find a way to replace it.
- **Encourage rational thinking.** Help your children understand what is fantasy and what is reality. For example, help them see that their behavior did not cause a divorce, or that they are not failures because they were not picked first for something.
- **Provide them with some control.** Allow your children to make choices within your family framework. For example, allow them to arrange their rooms, choose family activities, and help make family decisions.
- **Encourage them to eat healthy foods,** and emphasize the importance of a healthy **lifestyle.**

Get the stress out

Finding ways to get stress out of their systems will help children feel better. The best ways to relieve stress are different for each person. Try some of these ideas to see which ones work for your child:

- **Exercise.** Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress. For children, this means activities like walking, bike-riding, outdoor play, and individual and group sports.
- **Write or draw.** Older children often find it helpful to write about the things that are bothering them. Younger children may be helped by drawing about those things.
- **Let feelings out.** Invite your child to talk, laugh, cry, and express anger when he or she needs to.
- **Do something fun.** A hobby can help your child relax. Volunteer work or work that helps others can be a great stress reliever for older children.
- **Learn ways to relax.** This can include breathing exercises, muscle relaxation exercises, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, or relaxing exercises like tai chi and qi gong.
- **Laugh.** Laughter really can be the best medicine. You can be a good role model in this area by looking for the humor in life. Your child can learn this valuable skill by watching you.