

# STRESS

Adults don't have a corner on stress; just being a teenager can also mean being stressed. Teens are affected by many potential causes of stress:

## Things That May Cause Stress

Arguments  
Breakups with girlfriend or boyfriend  
School problems, grades  
Making decisions  
Sickness or injury  
Financial/money problems  
Pressure from friends or family  
Divorce or separation  
Death of family member or friend

## Signs of Stress

Feeling irritable  
Crying a lot  
Feeling depressed  
Worrying a lot  
Trouble sleeping  
Feeling angry  
Feeling scared  
Headaches  
Stomach problems  
Tense muscles  
Feeling nervous  
Feeling tired

Any time you are faced with a new or challenging task, your body tries to help you by producing hormones such as adrenaline to send extra power to your muscles and to help you focus your mind. When the stressor has passed, these chemicals are safely washed into the bloodstream and removed. When you experience continuous stress over a long period, however, the hormones build up rather than washing away. They can interfere with your body's ability to ward off infection, and you may find yourself coming down with a cold or flu.

## Dealing with Stress: Things You Can Do

- **Talk** to people. Keeping stress to yourself makes it harder to handle, and there is evidence that releasing feelings may give the immune system a boost.
- **Exercise.** This helps your muscles relieve tension while you relax and enjoy yourself
- Listen to **music**.
- Eat a light **breakfast** before going to school.
- Have **fun**. Laughter truly is the best medicine. Doing things that you like helps to relieve stress.
- Eat a balanced **diet**, with three meals a day.
- Avoid caffeine, sugar, alcohol, nicotine, and prescription or illegal drugs.
- Finish an evening of studying with some **leisure** reading or listening to music.
- Get a good night's **sleep**.
- Think about whether you could **change** things.
  - If there is something you could do to make things better, do it!
  - If something is beyond your control, try to accept it and not let it get to you.
- Try **relaxation** exercises:

- Picture yourself somewhere you feel relaxed and peaceful, and imagine how you would feel if you were there.
- Try first tightening up your muscles, one at a time, and then relaxing them. Start with your neck muscles, then your arms, your hands, your stomach, your back, your legs, and finally your toes. As you move the relaxation “wave” down your body, feel the tension disappear.
- **Don’t try to escape** your problems with alcohol or drugs; as soon as you come down from the high, your problems will be there as badly as or worse than before.

*If you feel that stress is becoming too much to handle, ask for help from a relative, teacher, counselor, or your doctor or nurse.*