EATING FOR LESS STRESS

Nutrition Tips for Stress Management

Stress is our bodies' reaction to change. Every time we experience a new situation, our bodies produce more adrenaline (a stimulant) which gives us extra energy to deal with the challenge at hand. This energy is "fueled" by the nutrients we store from the foods we eat. Too much stress can drain our supplies of these nutrients, leaving us with little or no fuel for our daily energy needs. This can result in feelings of weakness, fatigue, and yes, more stress! The key to eating for less stress is to avoid foods that aggravate our stress response, and to increase our bodies' stores of the nutrients we need to handle stressful situations.

Limit Caffeine and Alcohol

Like adrenaline, caffeine is a stimulant. Too much caffeine acts in the same way as too much stress, so caffeine can make stress symptoms worse. Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, chocolate and many sodas (especially colas). It's wise to limit caffeine in general, but it's particularly beneficial to avoid caffeine when you're under stress.

Alcohol is a depressant and can aggravate stress. All too often, people rely on caffeine to "pick" them up, and alcohol to bring them down. Avoid this stress seesaw by restricting your use of both caffeine and alcohol.

Eat Vitamin C-Rich Foods

Your adrenal glands (which produce adrenaline) use Vitamin C during episodes of physical stress. Illness or injury can deplete Vitamin C. Eating a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, especially citrus fruits, can help ensure that your body has adequate Vitamin C. You might also ask your physician or nutritionist about a Vitamin C supplement.

Eat Protein and Complex Carbohydrates

Your body also uses more protein and complex carbohydrates when you're under stress. Good sources of protein include peas, beans, fish, poultry, and lean meats. Complex carbohydrates are found in fruits, vegetables, and whole grain products such as breads, cereals and pasta. (Avoid refined flours and sugars as these can aggravate your stress response.)

Stress-less Eating is Healthy Eating

What you eat can affect how you feel. By following these nutritional tips for stress management, you'll be helping your body to handle stress more effectively, and you'll also be improving your nutritional health in general.