

6 Nutrients That Counteract the Negative Effects of Stress...

by Gale Maleskey, MS, RD from a: liveinthenow.com newsletter

People who are stressed out, sick or just plain exhausted are more likely to be drinking too much coffee or alcohol, skipping meals or overeating “comfort” foods, and not getting enough sleep. But these common reactions to stress only tend to make things worse by setting you up for nutritional deficiencies that can further affect your mental and physical wellbeing. Stress hormones sap the body of important nutrients, such as B vitamins, vitamin C and the mineral magnesium. They also increase blood pressure and heart rate, make your blood clot easier, destabilize blood sugar levels and can cause body-wide inflammation, setting the stage for chronic disease. A healthy diet is important to warding off the negative effects of stress. But if your normally-healthy eating habits are hitting the skids, nutritional supplements are important because they can help protect you by providing essential nutrients. Here is a rundown of a few of the nutrients that can help buoy your health status when stress, illness or fatigue get you down. And be sure to check out the video at the end of the slide show that discusses how to avoid catching stress from other people.

1. Vitamin C Tames Cortisol Levels...

This antioxidant reduces the secretion of cortisol, a stress hormone that impairs learning and memory, makes people depressed and suppresses immunity. Research shows that people who get extra vitamin C do not show the expected mental and physical signs of stress when subjected to a stress challenge. People who got 1,000 mg of vitamin C had lower levels of cortisol and lower blood pressure than those who did not get it. They also said they felt less stressed. We recommend 1,000 mg a day of vitamin C in two or three divided doses. If stress makes you get sick, we recommend taking vitamin C along with these other nutrients: vitamin D (1,000-2,000 IUs), zinc (20 mg), quercetin (500 mg) and decaffeinated green tea extract (450 mg).

2. CoQ10 Fights Fatigue...

If muscle weakness and fatigue are part of the picture, and, especially, if you have a weak heart or take cholesterol-lowering statin drugs, add CoQ10 to your supplements regimen. CoQ10 boosts energy efficiency in muscle cells' tiny power plants, called mitochondria. It improves exercise performance and reduces muscle soreness and feelings of fatigue. We recommend 100-400 mg a day of CoQ10.

3. B Vitamins Banish Stress...

B deficiency can cause symptoms of depression, anxiety and irritability, tiredness, loss of appetite, weight loss and mental confusion, so you can see how their depletion can compound stress. Alcohol abuse especially depletes B vitamins. Supplementing your diet with B vitamins can have a direct effect on important neurotransmitters in the brain, such as serotonin, norepinephrine, dopamine, acetylcholine and GABA. Two of the Bs, pantothenic acid and folic acid, also play a role in normal adrenal gland function. We recommend a balanced formula with all eight Bs, in these amounts: thiamine (25 mg), riboflavin (25 mg), niacin (25 mg), B6 (50 mg), folic acid (800 mcg), B12 (500 mcg), biotin (300 mcg) and pantothenic acid (50 mg).

4. Magnesium Induces Relaxation...

Some consider this essential mineral the most important nutrient when it comes to stress. Stress depletes magnesium, and magnesium depletion magnifies your stress response, so it becomes a vicious cycle. (Magnesium-deficient laboratory animals literally “jump” in their cages

in response to loud noise.) Taking magnesium as a nutritional supplement breaks this vicious cycle by raising blood magnesium levels and buffering the response to stress. Muscle tension, spasm and twitching are the most characteristic symptoms of magnesium deficiency, followed by palpitation and breathlessness. Irritability, fatigue, trouble falling asleep and hypersensitivity to loud noises are also common. We recommend at least 350 mg a day of magnesium, and up to 400 mg a day if you have symptoms of deficiency.

5. The Sleep Hormone Helps Recover From Stress...

Too much cortisol lowers blood levels of melatonin, a light-sensitive hormone that regulates wake and sleep cycles. Taking extra melatonin can reduce the excess production of cortisol. It also helps you sleep better, and that, in itself, will also lower stress hormone levels. Melatonin has also been used for benzodiazapem (Xanax) withdrawal and for nicotine withdrawal. If stress, pain, anxiety or withdrawal symptoms are interfering with your sleep, try taking 3 mg of melatonin about one-half hour before bedtime. You may need to take it for two weeks or more before you see an effect. The effect should be deeper, longer, more restful sleep.

6. Fish Oil Regulates Stress Hormones...

A study showed that after taking fish oil, an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids for three weeks, people's response to stress was blunted. They had lower levels of adrenaline and cortisol than before, translating into less anxiety. The DHA in fish oil helps to regulate serotonin, an important neurotransmitter also targeted by most antidepressants. Research shows that fish oil can play a role in regulating mood and may help antidepressants work better. In one interesting study, Japanese researchers found that people were less likely to express stress-induced aggression when they took 1.5 to 1.8 g daily of DHA for three months. We recommend 1,400-2,800 mg a day of fish oil during stressful times.

The bottom line is that research has shown time and again that stress is hazardous your health and can significantly diminish your longevity. Make sure that you are getting the nutrients you need to keep stress hormones levels under control and to support your body during stressful times.

PS from FactorReady.com: Several stress related specific products you may wish to consider that are available from stopagingnow.com include their following natural formulas: CalmTrex for mood enhancement, Magnesium Complex, Dream Well with time release melatonin, and Phosphatidyl Serine for brain and cognitive health. We would certainly suggest for Vitamin C benefits, the Liposomal quality formula at livelabs.com. Note: most natural calming products are formulated for adults only. If you are currently on medications (specifically any for depression or anxiety), pregnant or nursing a baby, consult a health care practitioner prior to using is the normal advice. For general health and cancer prevention, etc., please see our Health tab article at FactorReady.com, as well as specific Health pdf articles (in the Health Tips folders) under the Downloads tab. Stay Well, Stay Prepared and Stay Prayed Up!