

Stress and Nutrition

Diet

A well balanced diet is crucial in preserving health and helping to reduce stress. Certain foods and drinks act as powerful stimulants to the body and hence are a direct cause of stress. This stimulation, although quite pleasurable in the short term, may be quite harmful in the long run. We will look at a few of them:

Caffeine

This is found in coffee, tea, chocolate, Coke, etc. It causes the release of adrenaline, thus increasing the level of stress. When taken in moderation, coffee can increase your alertness, increased activity in the muscles, nervous system and heart. Consuming too much caffeine has the same effect as long term stress. It is suggested that there is a link between caffeine intake and high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels.

Be careful in reducing the coffee or caffeine consumption. Cutting it off abruptly can result in your experiencing withdrawal symptoms. Reduce the consumption slowly over a period of time.

Alcohol

Like caffeine, taken in moderation, alcohol is a very useful drug. It has been shown to benefit cardiovascular system. Alcohol is a major cause of stress. The irony of the situation is that most people take to drinking as way to combat stress. But, in actuality, they make it worse by consuming alcohol. Alcohol and stress, in combination, are quite deadly.

Alcohol stimulates the secretion of adrenaline resulting in the problems such as nervous tension, irritability and insomnia. Excess alcohol will increase the fat deposits in the heart and decrease the immune function. Alcohol also limits the ability of the liver to remove toxins from the body. During stress, the body produces several toxins such as hormones. In the absence of its filtering by the liver, these toxins continue to circulate through the body resulting in serious damage.

Smoking

Many people use cigarettes as a coping mechanism. In the short term, smoking seems to relieve stress. But in the long term smoking is very harmful. Its disadvantages far outweigh its short-term benefits. Cigarette smoking is shown to be responsible for a variety of cancers, hypertension, respiratory illness and heart disease.

Sugar

Sugar has no essential nutrients. It provides a short-term boost of energy through the body, resulting possibly in the exhaustion of the adrenal glands. This can result in irritability, poor concentration, and depression. High sugar consumption puts a severe load on the pancreas. There is increasing possibility of developing diabetes. Keep your blood sugar constant. Do not use sugar as a "pick me up."

Salt

Salt increases the blood pressure, deplete adrenal glands, and causes emotional instability. Sea Salt is a healthy alternative to regular salt.

Eat Food High In Fiber

Stress result in cramps and constipation. Eat more fiber to keep your digestive system moving. Your meal should provide at least 25 grams of fiber per day. Fruits, vegetables and grains are excellent sources of fiber. For breakfast, eat whole fruits instead of just juice, and whole-grain cereals and fiber-fortified muffins.

Fat

Avoid the consumption of foods rich in saturated fats. Fats cause obesity and put unnecessary stress on the cardiovascular system. High fat is believed to cause breast, colon and prostate cancers.

Eat a meal high in carbohydrates

Carbohydrates trigger release of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin, which soothes you. Do not eat anything that is highly processed including cookies, cakes and other sugary empty calorie foods. Good alternatives are sweet potatoes, peas, potatoes and whole grains.

Eat More Vegetables

Your brain's production of Serotonin, is sensitive to your diet. Eating more vegetables, can increase your brain's Serotonin production. This increase is due to improved absorption of the amino acid L-Tryptophan. (Vegetables contain the natural, safe, form of L Tryptophan.) Meats contain natural L-Tryptophan also, but when you eat meat, the L-Tryptophan has to compete with so many other amino acids for absorption that the L-Tryptophan loses out. The net result is that you get better absorption of L-Tryptophan when you eat vegetables.

Foods to Eat

Whole grains promote the production of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin, which increases your sense of well-being. Green, yellow, and orange vegetables are all rich in minerals, vitamins, and phytochemicals, which boost immune response and protect against disease.

Foods to Avoid

Coffee and other caffeinated beverages: If you are currently addicted to coffee, drink black tea; it has less than a third of the caffeine of coffee, and none of the harmful oils. Fried foods and foods rich in fat are very immune-depressing, especially when stress is doing that, as well. Reduce animal foods. High-protein foods elevate brain levels of dopamine and norepinephrine, both of which are associated with higher levels of anxiety and stress.

http://www.holisticonline.com/Stress/stress_diet.htm