

MAX

SPORTS **STRESS**

CUP DRIVEN

ANAHEIM DUCKS
PROVE HARD WORK
PAYS OFF

**BEAT
STRESS**
WITH EXERCISE

**IMMUNE
BOOSTERS**
FIGHT PESKY GERMS

**Holiday
Gift Guide:**
What's Hot on
Santa's List

**WINTER
WORKOUTS**
THE SNOW IS CALLING



BEAT STRESS

with

EXERCISE

Stress is bad, especially during the holidays. But you can fight it with these helpful tips. - By John Platero, CPT, RTS

TOO MUCH STRESS IS A KILLER. We all know that. Stress comes from physical, mental and/or emotional demands of everyday life. When stress is detected, the brain triggers a "fight or flight" response that causes the adrenal glands to secrete the hormone adrenaline. Adrenaline then increases heart rate, blood pressure and cortisol which depresses the immune system. Long ago, this "fight or flight" response occurred in situations of physical danger such as war or an attack of a wild animal. Presently, this response can be triggered by financial issues, traffic jams, school, exams, office politics, late nights, deadlines, dietary factors and, right now, the holidays. Caffeine, nicotine

and sugar can also stimulate the adrenal glands when no major external stress is present.

When we physically exert ourselves, our bodies release endorphins (chemical substances) that are similar in nature to opiates. These natural substances produced by our own bodies are free of side effects, except for making us feel good.

Your health is important, so be careful and don't get stressed out too much this holiday season. Make exercise a priority. Find an activity you enjoy and stick to it. If you don't know anyone who does it, do it anyway, eventually you'll make friends. Relax and smell the poinsettias! ▶▶

SYMPTOMS

Signs of stress include insomnia and early morning waking, teeth grinding at night, fatigue, headaches, depression, anxiety, panic attacks, irritability and aggressive behavior. If stress is prolonged over long periods of time, hypertension, heart attacks, depression, anxiety, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, menstrual problems and adrenal exhaustion can occur.

EXERCISES

The best exercise depends on you. Here are some ideas that might just do the trick:

GO SOLO

If you work around a lot of people, go somewhere by yourself. A solo hike, jog or bike ride might be the thing for you. Obviously it is more relaxing to walk along a nature trail than to walk along a busy street.

SWEAT IT OUT

Feeling uptight? Try a boxing or kickboxing class to help release some tension. If you don't feel like working out, buddy up. A group exercise class or a personal trainer can help motivate you or plan the workout. Compete against someone in a tennis, racquetball or golf game. However, if these activities create more stress than they alleviate, steer clear of them.

CLEAR YOUR MIND

Try Yoga or Tai Chi, which focus on the inner system and incorporate deep breathing, stretching and meditation. Remember, after 15 - 20 minutes, the endorphins epinephrine and norepinephrine are released into the system, which lower tension and keep stress stabilized. Therefore all aerobic activities lasting at least that long or longer lower your stress level.

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Stronger immune system. The better shape you are in, the stronger your immune system will be.

Sleep. Regular exercise has shown to be very effective in helping people fall asleep easily and sleep more soundly.

Endorphins. The positive mood states associated with frequent exercise is so significant that some believe exercise is the most effective treatment for clinical depression. Even more so than anti-depressant drugs.

Introspection. Exercise can be a solitary escape from the daily pressures from a stressful society. Swimming, hiking, cycling or a good run can provide a mini-vacation where you can self-reflect on important issues, create solutions and recharge energy levels.

Reduce muscular tension. Stress causes muscle tightness. Exercise causes muscles to work, thereby releasing stored tension allowing the muscles to return to their optimal length.

HELPFUL TIPS

On the days you don't exercise, do something else that relaxes you:

- * Go for a massage
- * Pamper yourself with a facial
- * Try aromatherapy
- * Listen or play music
- * Paint
- * Dance
- * Avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine
- * Drink relaxing teas such as chamomile
- * Drink plenty of water
- * Garden
- * Get good sleep