

## APRIL IS NATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

Work demands, financial pressures, family problems, and many other things can cause stress. Stress is a normal response to the regular demands in life. A little bit of stress is good, but chronic stress can be detrimental to health.

Everyone experiences stress and it has been associated with almost 80 percent of all illnesses. It is known to exacerbate a number of health problems, including heart disease, asthma, insomnia, low immunity, back pain, digestive problems, acne, obesity, depression, and anxiety.

Here are some effective stress-busters:

*Click on the links to learn more*

- **LAUGH**- Watch a funny show or share a joke. Laughter has shown to lower blood pressure and decrease the level of the stress hormone cortisol.
- **MEDITATE**- Mindful meditation, deep breathing exercises, Yoga etc. are just some of the ways to calm your mind. Just 5-10 minutes a day can make a difference
- **BE POSITIVE**- A voluntary and deliberate effort to think positive has been known to decrease the incidence of anxiety and cardiovascular disease. Encourage others in your group to think positive too.
- **EXERCISE** –Increases the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins which reduces fatigue, improves alertness and enhances overall cognitive function.
- **SLEEP** - A good night's sleep makes you able to tackle the day's stress more easily. Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep per night. Practicing good sleep hygiene along with stress-lowering tactics can help improve your quality of sleep. Sleep helps with the health and repair of all of our cells in the body.
- **CULTIVATE GRATITUDE**- People who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits that include physical, mental and emotional well-being. Keep a gratitude journal. It can be beneficial to create a daily habit of remembering what you are thankful for.
- **EAT RIGHT**- Stress can take a toll on your body's natural defenses, but eating the right foods can offer relief. Complex carbohydrates, fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts and fish have shown to help by helping with the production of distressing neurotransmitters
- **STRENGTHEN YOUR SOCIAL BONDS**- Living in a digital era, which is dominated by so much screen time, takes a toll on social bonds and communications. The quality, not the quantity of your close relationships is of great importance. Oxytocin released in the brain increases serotonin which in-turn activates the 'reward circuitry' of the brain, resulting in a happy feeling.
- **VOLUNTEER**- Volunteering to help others has shown to have beneficial effects on blood pressure and mental health. It prevents social isolation and depression.
- **CHOCOLATE-DESSERTS (“STRESSED” REVERSED)**- Flavonoid rich chocolate supplementation reduces oxidative stress in cells and is a stress buster!