

Stress Builds Silently but Deadly

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Daily stress is a killer. Stress contributes to premature death and is the key leading factor for disease within the body. Stress causes the body to shift from a harmonious existence to a state of disharmony.

Most people think that the negative influence of stress is simply limited to “the really big” things in life. Unfortunately, however, the simple everyday stress of living can compound and become just as dangerous or even more harmful to our health. Stress is so significant to our personal health that now it is believed to trigger an incredible seventy percent of all visits to doctors and an alarming eighty-five percent of all serious illnesses, according to recent stress statistics from the UK’s Health and Safety Executive Commission.

Stress can be broken down into two major categories with two sub-categories. The categories are:

1. Acute Stress (short-term exposure)
2. Chronic Stress (long-term exposure)

The sub-categories are classified as either ‘Internal’ or ‘External’ stressors.

Acute Stress - This form of stress is considered short term and arises from either an internal or external stressor that you experience for a limited period of time. Examples of **Internal Acute Stressors** can arise from short term illness, inflammation, injury, plus dietary and lifestyle errors. **External Acute Stressors** come in the form of a near miss on the freeway, getting frustrated standing in line, interacting short-term with a person with an unsettling outcome.

Chronic Stress - This form of stress occurs as a result of prolonged or unresolved events. It can be compared to the erosion of a mountain into pebbles. Just as rain and wind can destroy a mountain over the course of time, stress long term will literally erode the very foundation of your health. Chronic stress arises from extended illnesses, protracted financial challenges, relationship difficulties and, all too often, just daily living in today’s modern world of high intensity and over-stimulation. Just as with acute stress, there are both internal and external sources for chronic stress.

Regardless of whether you are experiencing acute or chronic stressors, it is the combination of all stressors that determines your “Total Stress Burden”.

What Price Do You Pay for Stress?

In the 1930’s Hans Seyle, the pioneer in the field of stress research, discovered how the human organism adapted to stressful events and circumstances. The proverbial “fight or flight” response was first described by Dr. Seyle. By 1977, there were over 110,000 articles in medical literature showing what occurs when stress happens in a person’s life and the physical price that is paid as a result.

When you experience any stressful circumstance, your body can not differentiate its response from a life-threatening event or a mere hiccup in the journey of life. Even when the stress arises from something generally considered positive, such as getting married, purchasing a house or car, or getting a job promotion - the human body still exhibits the same stress response pattern.

This stress response brings on a cascade of chemicals that are released within your body from your adrenal glands. These chemicals are **adrenaline** (epinephrine), **noradrenaline** (norepinephrine) and **cortisol**. In combination, the release of these substances triggers the classical stress response where the skeletal muscles and the heart get increased blood flow as the trigger for the body to enter “primitive survival mode” in preparation for a ferocious fight or rapid flight from danger. However, this also causes all other vital organs to receive a critically diminished blood flow.

Proneness to experience mental stress is a risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease, an effect that is in addition to other Alzheimer’s pathologic markers such as brain plaques and tangles.¹ Indeed, the highest stressed individuals over the course of a five-year review developed Alzheimer’s at “double” the rate of the least-stressed group. This fact about stress alone should trigger you to strongly reconsider whether it is worth losing your mind. The last comment paying homage to the saying: “This is causing me to lose my mind” has now been proven to be true both literally and figuratively. In large part this can be related to oxidative damage arising from free radicals that become elevated as a result of stress. As stated in the conclusion of a powerful study on stress: “These findings support the need for magnesium supplementation with antioxidant vitamins for people living in conditions of chronic stress.”ⁱⁱ

However in today's world, neither fight nor flight are viable options. Unlike fighting a mountain lion or deciding to run away from it, the daily stress grind just keeps on happening. This is why supporting the body mentally and nutritionally so it is better able to cope with stress is important.

The Critical Physical Effects of Stress

- a. Lowered Immune System
- b. Excessive Wear and Tear on Heart
- c. High Blood Pressure
- d. Insomnia – Preventing 'rest-oration'
- e. Accelerating Circulatory Failure
- f. Premature Aging
- g. Increased Inflammation and Pain
(especially chronic stress).
- h. Nutrient Depletion

When the mind or the body is stressed, the cascade of chemical changes within the body are purely focused on surviving the stressor even at the cost of long-term well-being. If a person does not support the body during and after the stress response, the circulation deficit reduces nourishment and cleansing of the vital organs. In addition, the stress response reduces the circulation of white blood cells necessary to support the immune system. These two major issues will be compounded over the course of time yielding further negative effects within the body.

Stress kills either slowly or as the precipitating factor for a heart attack, stroke, illness, or misery in general. I recommend that my patients incorporate traditional Chinese mushrooms into their health maintenance protocols to help offset the effects of stress. Chinese mushrooms have been incorporated into health promoting diets for centuries to help the body adapt to stress.

Cordyceps (*Cordyceps Sinensis*)

Traditionally used for enhancing vitality, Cordyceps possesses unique adaptogenic properties. These adaptogenic properties allow the body to adapt to both internal and external changes that arise.ⁱⁱⁱ Cordyceps provides this needed buffer to stress in one's life via its ability to serve as an anti-oxidant, immunomodulator, cardiovascular and respiratory supportive nutritive herb.

In Life Science in 2004 it was reported after research that: "The pharmacological characterization of Cordyceps by means of contemporary bioassays is consistent with the time-honored clinical observation from Chinese herbalists." Cordyceps possesses these

properties and therefore has been revered for its ability to allow the human body to thrive under adverse circumstances.^{iv}

Once again Cordyceps helps mitigate the effects of stress by enhancing microcirculation, quenching free radicals, bolstering immune function and supporting longevity that becomes compromised. Cordyceps has been shown in animal studies to possess clear anti-aging effects as the authors of another 2004 study states: Cordyceps extract "... has good anti-aging effects on the aged mice, which is probably due to effects of improving anti-oxidation and removing free radicals." Indeed studies of mice and men show that Cordyceps can serve as a key component to wellness program.

LingZhi (*Ganoderma lucidum*)

This dynamic herb is clinically used in natural health practice to support immune function. LingZhi also possesses significant ability to serve as an anti-inflammatory. In addition, LingZhi is a circulatory enhancer by both increasing microcirculation and also increasing the fluidity of the blood as a mild blood thinner.

Therefore, LingZhi supports the body during daily stresses and helps to fortify the body during times of extra stress. A recent study concluded that "All these results demonstrate the abilities of PS-G to enhance neutrophil function in phagocytosis and chemotaxis, and further provides evidence to strengthen the beneficial remedy of *Ganoderma lucidum* (LingZhi) in human to enhance defense system."^v

Healthful Habits to help Lessen Stress

The reality is stress happens and there is no way to completely avoid its intrusion into your life. However, you are in control of how you allow it to affect you and your well-being.

1. The incorporation of Cordyceps and LingZhi are two good cornerstones for the health conscious individual to help your body adapt to stress, enhance the microcirculation of nourishment, to help flush-out toxins and metabolic waste, and support your immune system.
2. Get plenty of quality sleep. My goal for all my patients is solid eight hours per night. I frequently recommend a stress-reducing pillow, such as a NanoPro Pillow to enhance microcirculation through RRE (reflected resonant energy). This will help provide a deeper, more restful sleep to help restore the body.

3. Consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables high in Vitamin C and the B Vitamins are critical since it is these nutrients that can reach suboptimal levels as a result of chronic stress.

4. It is also essential to incorporate an exercise program into your life. My patients on an exercise regime, routinely report having less stress in their lives, feeling better and having more energy. The human body was designed to exercise and the actual process of exercising incorporated with the healthy diet can help counter some of the negative effects of stress.

5. Companionship and a healthy sex life are important stress relievers, increasing longevity and helping ensure a healthy blend of quality and quantity of life. In my first international book, 'Better Sex Naturally' I clearly state that a healthy sex life is a barometer of one's overall health. Indeed it is a 'catch-22' because when stressed, intimacy and overall relationship health suffers. Yet, it is these two factors that determine success of getting through stressful times. If your stress is climbing, put your foot on the brake and take a moment to re-focus. Remember you are in charge of your destiny even when you might not feel like it.

6. Participate in stress-reduction techniques, such as yoga, tai-chi, meditation, therapeutic massage or aromatherapy. Participate in the cultural fine arts, such as drawing and painting, playing a musical instrument or even singing in a choir. Also pursuit of spiritual growth and practice has been shown to be a factor in long term well-being.

If you are curious about how you are doing with stress, take a minute and evaluate yourself with the following 'stress-free' stress test.

Should you experience one or more of the items in the list then some extra stress support should be high on your list. If you score well, then take this chance to maintain your level of wellness by being proactive about your health. Regardless of how you score, at the cellular level your body suffers from each and every stressor you experience and we all must take care not to allow stress to get the best of us.

Stress-Free Stress Test: (*do you have?*)

- Sleep difficulties
- Loss of appetite
- Poor concentration
- Poor memory retention
- Performance decline
- Missed deadlines
- Increased errors in work or daily living
- Anger or tantrums
- Decline in social graces
- Emotional outbursts
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Nervous habits (nail biting, etc.)

Summary

Everyone has a choice on how to deal with the daily stress they encounter. You can choose to 'de-stress' through relaxing techniques and the good health regimens outlined above, or you can become 'distressed' which leads to 'dis-ease' which leads to 'disease'. I trust you will choose to de-stress.

ⁱ Wilson RS, Evans DA, Bienias JL, Mendes de Leon CF, Schneider JA, Bennett DA. Proneness to psychological distress is associated with risk of Alzheimer's disease.

ⁱⁱ Cernak I, Savic V, Kotur J, Prokic V, Kuljic B, Grbovic D, Veljovic M. Alterations in magnesium and oxidative status during chronic emotional stress. *Magnes Res.* 2000 Mar; 13(1):29-36.

ⁱⁱⁱ Koh JH, Kim KM, Kim JM, Song JC, Suh HJ., Antifatigue and antistress effect of the hot-water fraction from mycelia of *Cordyceps sinensis*. *Biol Pharm Bull.* 2003 May;26(5):691-4.

^{iv} Siu KM, Mak DH, Chiu PY, Poon MK, Du Y, Ko KM. Pharmacological basis of 'Yin-nourishing' and 'Yang-invigorating' actions of *Cordyceps*, a Chinese tonifying herb. *Life Sci.* 2004 Dec 10; 76(4):385-95.

^v Hsu MJ, Lee SS, Lee ST, Lin WW. Signaling mechanisms of enhanced neutrophil phagocytosis and chemotaxis by the polysaccharide purified from *Ganoderma lucidum*. *Br J Pharmacol.* 2003 May; 139(2):289-98.

These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration.
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