

Does Nutrition Have Anything to Do With Stress?

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We all have stressful situations, and sometimes on a daily basis. However, stress can be avoided as we realize the source and learn how to manage it. Nutrition plays a big part of stress. As we eat foods that are high in nutrients and give us the energy and ultimate performance, plus drink good cleansing drinks and exercise, we are on our way to avoiding stress.

Content:

We all have many things to do within the hours of each day. With so many opportunities available, it is hard to not over do it and put more into our schedules than we can handle.

Not only are we over scheduled, there are always many unforeseen situations that come up in life that we have no control over: loss of employment, accidents, health problems, loss of a loved one, daily unplanned events, and more. Because of these situations, we can become stressed, angry, frustrated, feel rejected and depressed which can lead to health problems such as high blood pressure, heart attacks, headaches, loss of sleep, indigestion, stroke and more. We will always have these types of situations - a part of life - but we can learn to avoid stress as we become aware of what is causing it or fueling it and by choosing to face the situation instead of reacting to it.

Does nutrition and what we eat have anything to do with stress?

It actually has a lot to do with it in the way it is handled and managed. When we get so involved in life's activities, we often times forget about eating well. In fact, we usually tend to grab high-calorie, high fat, empty-nutrition foods, turn to sweets or caffeinated beverages, or even forget to eat at all. This actually creates more stress on the body because we are lacking the vital nutrients to function properly and our blood sugar levels fluctuate. Thus, we become depressed, lethargic, lack energy and concentration, and even experience mood swings.

Why do we have a tendency to crave the empty-nutrition foods while under stress? Our brain has a way of needing balance and while under pressure it makes us do something that will release neurotransmitters that will cause us to relax. Usually the quickest and easiest way to achieve this is by indulging on pleasure foods: candy, pastries, sodas, fried foods, etc. The smells, taste and textures actually excite the chemicals within the brain that will give us this short-term satisfaction. With this instantaneous gratification, we continue to do it over and over again.

However, we must keep in mind that in order for the body to function properly (physically, mentally, and emotionally), it must be properly fueled. Just as an automobile must have good fuel to perform properly, so must our bodies. Our fuel for high energy and performance comes in the way of nutrients from good quality foods. If we have diets of highly processed foods (white flour, white sugar, high fats and salt) with little nutrient value, then the body cannot function to its capacity, becomes stressed, over loaded, and it becomes sick and diseased.

If we will include the following suggestions in our daily eating and drinking habits, we will be much more capable of handling stressful situations.

1) Think of the foods God gives us in their whole food form: raw fruits and vegetables, raw nuts and seeds, whole grains, legumes (beans and peas). These all have a higher nutritional content than processed foods. They are naturally high in fiber and provide the right balance of carbohydrates, fats and proteins. We must have good nourishing foods at every meal for the body to have the nutrients to perform properly. As we do, we are able to think and react logically to the pressures and situations that we face. What we eat really does make a difference in how we act and think!

2) Take the time to eat and chew your food properly. Good digestion of foods ultimately begins in the mouth as the saliva breaks down the chemicals in the food in conjunction with the chewing process. Onto the stomach, the digestion process works for your body to get the nutrients and energy it needs from the food you eat. Give yourself at least 20-30 minutes to eat a meal, sitting down and relaxing while your body goes to work and does its job.

3) Think and prepare ahead so that, in this fast pace world, you always have good nourishing foods to grab in a momentâ€™s notice. Easy-to-grab foods are: fresh fruits such as apples, pears, and bananas (which all come â€™pre-packagedâ€™), raw nuts (you can carry these in a baggie in purse and car), fruit leather, dried fruit and raw nut mixes, whole grain rolls and crackers, whole grain health bars, etc. Of course, you will find many of these in low and high quality brands, so read labels and choose those minimally processed. There is a lot you can grab on the run that has good high quality nutrition. Take the time initially to plan, purchase and prepare.

4) What we drink is just as important. Drinks such as alcohol, sodas, coffee, hot chocolate, and most fruit juices (frozen, bottled) are dehydrators and de-energizers. What we really need is good pure water! Every function in the body greatly relies on water. Lack of water causes us to become dehydrated, which restricts the activity of all these functions. Our best bodyâ€™s performance comes from having a clean system. Good, pure, distilled water is our best cleanser, therefore cleansing and energizing to the system.

5) Set aside time each day to exercise. Exercise is the absolute best medicinal cure for those times that you start to feel stressed or avoiding it altogether. It is necessary for the body functions to work optimally, and within 20-40 minutes, exercise can easily correct stressful situations.

6) Turn on peaceful music to soothe, calm and relax you. We all need times of relaxation throughout the day. Also take time to meditate and focus on worthy goals, your blessings, and the peaceful things of life. Watching the flowers and grass sway in the breeze is so relaxing to the soul (so much more than television). These exercises help put life into the perspective of whatâ€™s really important and help avoid unworthy thoughts and feelings.

We cannot just simply eliminate all the pressures of life. Yet we can learn to manage and eliminate the effects of stressful situations by applying principles of good nutrition, eating, and drinking in this manner. Focus on the real whole foods and pure water and you can expect the bodyâ€™s best performance!

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