



February Wellness:

Stress Management for Healthy Hearts

The stress response can look different in every individual. However, there are some common symptoms. These symptoms may include headaches, back strain, muscle aches, fatigue, interrupted sleep and irritability. Prolonged stress can lead to health problems that impact heart health. In an article through the Mayo Clinic Health System, effects of stress on heart health are mentioned. These effects include:

- ◆ High blood pressure; which is a symptom of stress for some individuals.
- ◆ High cholesterol levels; which may occur when some individuals are under stress.
- ◆ Smoking or overeating; which are unhealthy habits that some individuals may turn to in times of stress.
- ◆ Decreased healthy habits, such as exercise or staying on routine with doctor appointments and screenings; which some individuals may not be able to find time for during stressful times.

Studies are currently exploring how managing stress can help reduce the risk of heart disease. Because of the direct link of stress to overall health, implementing strategies for stress reduction is good for enhancement of overall well-being and promotion of relaxation.

One step in managing stress is identifying triggers. It may be found that some triggers/stressors can be let go of to relieve stress. For triggers that can *not* be let go, a stress management plan can help. Some quick ideas from the Mayo Clinic article include:

- ◆ Focusing on your strengths and doing activities that energize you.
- ◆ Taking the time to stay socially connected.
- ◆ Engaging in acts of kindness or finding volunteer opportunities.
- ◆ Participating in a creative activity that you enjoy.
- ◆ Starting a journal or noticing mindful moments during your day.

The article from the Mayo Clinic also offers additional tips for stress management, such as exercising, eating nutritiously and more. It also looks at how some stress is actually good, and can motivate and promote optimal functioning in daily life. To reach the article, click here:

[Tips to Keep Stress from Hurting Your Heart](#)