

Stress is Stressful

“A highly important change has occurred in the incidence of disease in our country . . . serious infections, formerly extensive and disastrous, have markedly decreased or almost disappeared, . . . meanwhile conditions involving strain in the nervous system have been greatly augmented.”

—“The role of emotion in disease” Annals of Internal Medicine 5/36

Life in the new millennium is stressful for most. Changes are occurring rapidly in society, technology and in the world in general. These changes include: Life style changes, changing moral values, changes in career, family and finances. Stress involves changes in the body's chemical, mental, emotional, and physiological reactions to accommodate a situation that is new or frightening. This response triggers changes within the autonomic nervous system to prepare for a 'fight or flight' response.

That natural 'fight or flight' response gives us the speed and endurance to escape physical dangers. This is a beneficial response to stress. However, when stress triggers the 'fight or flight' hormones in response to daily stressors, other hormones released into the blood stream may then contribute to: Accelerated aging, depression, chronic fatigue syndrome, immune system, dysfunction, sleep disorders, obesity, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, increased menopausal symptoms, and decreased memory.

It has been shown in studies of women suffering from depression that the level of bone loss is surprisingly high and rapid. Studies of marital disagreement show release of 'fight or flight' hormones. The stress hormone levels among women showed that they were much more sensitive to negative behavior than their husbands. If hormone levels stay elevated for extended periods of time the susceptibility to disease and illness rises rapidly.

HOW STRESS AFFECTS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM?

Research has proven that not only does stress diminish the body's ability to defend against potential invaders such as germs and viruses, even the day-in-and-day-out effects of stress take their toll. The body's ability to produce antibodies when under stress is extremely minimized. Without adequate remedies to reduce the negative effects of stress your body will not be able to be all that it could be.

In a stressful situation (acute physical stress, chronic physical stress, emotional or psychological stress) the adrenal glands shift from hormone production to primarily cortisol production. If you are in danger cortisol will help to save your life, but if you are under prolonged stress these same hormones can lead to the demise of your health. Prolonged stress eventually causes adrenal fatigue (malfunction). As the adrenals begin to wear out it is important to remove or at least reduce the stress and provide appropriate nutrition to minimize the negative influence on the adrenal glands.

The slow insidious wear and tear of daily stressors lowers the body's ability to fight infections. Holmes and Rahe created the Social Readjustment Rating Scale to objectively measure the cumulative totality of stress and its effect upon the body. What it clearly demonstrates is that the more life change units an individual has been subjected to, the greater the probability that one is going to experience the negative effects of stress. Disease and illness do not just happen at random, they occur when an individual's body is no longer able to resist the negative influences such as sickness and disease. Take the stress test and see where you are.

SOCIAL READJUSTMENT RATING SCALE

Record each event that has happened to you over the past twelve months by writing the number on the left in the right column.

100	Death of spouse	_____
65	Marital separation	_____
63	Jail term	_____
53	Personal injury or illness	_____
50	Marriage	_____
47	Fired at work	_____
45	Retirement	_____
44	Change in health of a family member	_____
40	Pregnancy	_____
39	Sexual difficulties	_____
39	Gain of a new family member	_____
39	Business readjustment	_____
38	Change in financial state	_____
37	Death of a close friend	_____
36	Change to a different line of work	_____
35	Change in number of arguments with spouse	_____
31	Taking out a mortgage or loan over \$10,000	_____
30	Foreclosure of a mortgage or a loan	_____
29	Change in your responsibilities at work	_____
29	A son or daughter leaving home	_____
29	Having trouble with your in-laws	_____
28	An outstanding personal achievement	_____
26	A spouse begins or stops work	_____
25	You begin or end school	_____
24	Change in your living conditions	_____
23	A revision of your personal habits	_____
20	Having trouble with your boss	_____
20	A change in your work hours or conditions	_____
20	A change in your residence	_____
19	Changing schools	_____
19	A change in your recreational activities	_____
19	A change in your church activities	_____
18	A change in your social activities	_____
17	Taking out a mortgage or loan for less than \$10,000	_____
16	A change in your sleeping habits	_____
15	A change in the number of family get-togethers	_____
13	Taking a vacation	_____
12	Christmas or a major holiday	_____
11	Minor violation of law including moving traffic tickets	_____

Add the total number of points and compare with the following chart:

SCORE	LIFE CRISIS LEVEL	PROBABILITY OF ILLNESS
0 - 149	Normal	1%
150 - 199	Mild life crisis	33%
200 - 299	Moderate life crisis	50%
300+	Severe life crisis	80%

