



HOW STRESS AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH

by Kelly Thomson, MSHP

Have you been struggling with lingering headaches, fatigue, or lack of motivation? While you may assume that these conditions are due to an illness or your sleep patterns, you should also consider that they could be linked to chronic stress. Chronic stress can affect your body, mood, and behavior. It may also have severe effects on your health that are tough to reverse if not managed early. While stress affects everyone differently, the most common related health problems are:

- Headaches
- Chest pain
- Fatigue/restlessness
- Trouble sleeping
- Upset stomach
- Anxiety
- Lack of focus
- Muscle tension (especially in the shoulders)
- Irritability/quick to anger
- Sadness/feelings of depression
- Tobacco/alcohol use
- Social withdrawal
- Change in appetite (over or under-eating)

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If these symptoms occur too often or last too long, they can snowball into bigger health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, depression, or accelerated aging. It could also make it more difficult for your body to fight off viral infections, such as the flu or common cold.

The good news is that there are many healthy ways you can manage your stress. Every person is different, so try not to give up if the first method you try does not relieve your symptoms.

- **Exercise:** Regular physical activity can boost your mood and energy levels while reducing stress. Yoga and tai chi can be effective tools, or even simply taking a walk.
- **Deep breathing or meditation:** Focusing on your breathing can relax your muscles and mind. This can be done by sitting or lying in a comfortable position, closing your eyes, and inhaling and exhaling slowly. Massages can also help you relax and release tension.
- **Focus on healthy habits:** “Stress eating” is a common way that people deal with a stressful situation. While it may distract you and make you feel better in the short term, it can lead to obesity and other health problems in the long run. Concentrate on eating a balanced diet, which will help you feel better overall and keep you alert. Avoid excessive caffeine and alcohol intake and make sure to get plenty of sleep.
- **Talk to your family or friends:** Lean on your support system during tough times and don't be afraid to ask for help. You may also consider seeing a physician or counselor to assist in managing your stress. ☞

Sources: Mayo Clinic. mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987?pg=1. Accessed 16 March 2015.
WebMD. webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-effects-of-stress. Accessed 16 March 2015.
National Institute of Mental Health. nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml. Accessed 16 March 2015.

3 WAYS TIME OFF HELPS WELL-BEING

by Kaitlin Enneking

Spring is approaching and many of us are daydreaming about vacations and time off; however, if you're anything like the rest of America, you probably leave a fair number of eligible vacation days on the table each year. In fact, the average American reports using only half, or 51%, of their eligible paid time off.

Using vacation days isn't just about planning a trip to the beach. It provides an opportunity for you to unplug from your normal routine. This down time benefits your health and may make you more productive at your job when you return. Here are 3 ways time-off can improve your well-being:

Benefits your health: Taking time away from work and routine allows the body to recharge its batteries. This revitalizing state decreases stress and improves your mood.

Changes your perspective: Stepping back from your work, whether it's to travel the world or get some household chores done, allows you to look at life through a different lens. This change in perspective may help you appreciate things that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

FINANCIAL CORNER WITH PETE THE PLANNER

We've been conditioned to believe all technology is good. We've been taught convenience is good. We've also been taught budgeting is what gives your financial life order. So it seems natural to combine budgeting and technology because if budgeting is more convenient, you'll be more likely to do it. This is the appeal of budgeting apps. Yet, it doesn't quite work out so magically. Budgeting apps have a tendency to make you LESS aware of what is going on in your financial life. When your app syncs with your bank account you are taken out of the equation. Budgeting should be a little inconvenient. When you use a spreadsheet to manually take stock of what you are spending you start to see patterns of spending. This leads to change. Oh, and less stress! Enter your expenses once a month, set goals for the upcoming month, and be done with it. ☒

Increases your focus: How many hours have you spent at work wishing you were somewhere else? Taking vacation days can prevent boredom and keep you focused while at your job. ☒

Sources: FirstPerson. blog.firstpersonadvisors.com/dont-be-a-statistic-use-your-pto. Accessed 15 March 2015.
Fast Company. fastcompany.com/3030865/work-smart/why-taking-a-vacation-can-make-you-better-at-your-job. Accessed 15 March 2015.



NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK APRIL 6 - 12

The first full week of April is National Public Health Week. This is a time to recognize the contributions of public health and highlight issues that are important to improving our nation. Together we can create the best opportunity for Americans to live long, happy, and healthy lives.

HARVEST OF THE MONTH: SNAP PEAS

by Mechelle Meadows

Snap peas, also known as sugar snap peas, are a cross between a snow pea and green pea. This particular variation has pods that are easily edible, making this a quick snack option or an easy addition to a recipe that doesn't require taking the peas out of the pod. They are known for their sweet, crispy taste that can appeal even to non-veggie lovers. Although small, these peas are full of important vitamins and nutrients. One 3-ounce serving provides more than half of the recommended daily intake of vitamin C and half the amount of niacin. They also provide 20% of the daily recommended iron amount for men and 10% for women.

How to select

Choose snap peas that are bright green and free from marks or blemishes. They should be firm to the touch, not soft or wilted.

How to store

Fresh snap peas have the highest amount of antioxidants, as well as the sweetest flavor, so serve them as soon as possible. Both taste and health benefits will decline after being stored for too long, but you can store peas for up to two days in a perforated bag in your refrigerator's crisper section.



How to prepare

Snap peas can be eaten raw or cooked. Whichever method is used, the stem and strings from each pea pod should first be removed and discarded. Sautéed or steamed peas should become more tender, but still maintain their crisp texture. When cooking snap peas in a skillet, toss them with olive oil and seasonings of choice. Cook them until small, scorched brown spots appear on the outside of the pods, no more than 3-5 minutes. ♪

Sources: SFGate. healthyating.sfgate.com/benefits-sugar-snap-peas-6013.html. Accessed 6 March 2015.

Fruits & Veggies More Matters. fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/sugar-snap-peas-nutrition-selection-storage. Accessed 6 March 2015.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH: *Lemony Snap Peas*

Ingredients

8 cups water
12 ounces sugar snap peas, with stems and strings removed
½ teaspoon grated lemon rind
2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 Tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
½ teaspoon sugar
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 shallot, minced

Nutritional Info

PER SERVING: 73 calories, 3.6g fat, 0.5g saturated fat, 2.5g monounsaturated fat, 0.4g polyunsaturated fat, 8.4g carbohydrates, 2.5g protein, 154mg sodium, 2.3g fiber, 39mg calcium, 1.8mg iron

Directions

1. Bring 8 cups of water to a boil in a large Dutch oven. Add peas and cook 30 seconds, or until crisp-tender. Drain and plunge into ice water; drain. Slice half of peas diagonally.
2. Combine lemon rind and remaining ingredients in a medium bowl and stir with a whisk. Add peas and toss to coat.

Makes 4 servings (1 serving = 1 cup).

Source: My Recipes. myrecipes.com/recipe/lemony-snap-peas. Accessed 6 March 2015.