

## Monthly Health Feature – May 2008

### Stress Management and Prevention Tips

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According to Dr. Deepak Chopra, "Stress is the perception of physical or psychological threat. Stress is not something you have innately, nor is it in the environment; it is how you interpret what is happening in your life." (Yahoo! Health, 2007). If we follow his mantra, a stress-free life is within reach by simply changing our own interpretations. This sounds easy, but if your life is stressful you know it's not so simple. Here are some more tips for stress prevention from **HealthyWomen.org**:

- "Eat a balanced, nutritious diet. General health and stress resistance can be enhanced by eating well and by avoiding intake of alcohol, caffeine, tobacco and junk food.
- **Exercise regularly because exercise promotes emotional well-being as well as physical fitness.**
- Schedule your time more effectively using a calendar and to-do lists, prioritizing activities and realizing you can't do everything.
- **Learn how to say no to requests that add extra burdens and can wreak havoc on your day.**
- Insist on help with regular chores.
- **Balance work and play by planning time for hobbies and recreation—activities that relax your mind and take you away from stresses temporarily. Even diversions like taking a warm shower, going to a movie or taking a walk can help you feel better.**
- Practice relaxation exercises every day, including visualization, deep muscle relaxation, meditation and deep breathing.
- **Rehearse for stressful events. Imagine yourself feeling calm and confident in an anticipated stressful situation. You will be able to relax more easily when the situation arises.**
- Let yourself laugh and cry. Laughter makes your muscles go limp and releases tension, so try to keep a sense of humor. Tears can help cleanse the body of substances that accumulate under stress.
- **Talk out troubles. It sometimes helps to talk with a friend, relative or member of the clergy. Another person can help you see a problem from a different point of view.**
- Help others. Because we concentrate on ourselves when we're distressed, sometimes helping others is the perfect remedy for whatever is troubling us.
- **Learn acceptance when a difficult problem is out of your control, which is better than worrying and getting nowhere.**
- Develop and maintain a positive attitude. View changes as positive challenges, opportunities or blessings."

It is not necessary to follow all of these tips, but instead you should find what works for you. Stress varies greatly from individual to individual, and therefore the right preventative measures will differ. It is important to deal with the stress in your life before it causes serious health problems. Short-lived or infrequent episodes of stress pose little risk. But when stressful situations go unresolved, the body is kept in a constant state of activation, which increases the rate of wear and tear to biological systems. Ultimately, fatigue or damage results, and the ability of the body to repair and defend itself can become seriously compromised. As a result, the risk of injury or disease escalates (NIOSH, 2008).

A Health Coach with the UI Wellness [liveWELL](#) program can work with you on stress management. Additional, supportive resources that a Health Coach can also visit with you about include:

[Employee Assistance Program](#)

[Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction](#)

References:

- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2008. “STRESS...At Work.” <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/stresswk.html>
- Healthy Women, 2008. “Stress.” <http://www.healthywomen.org/healthtopics/stress/prevention>
- Chopra, Dr. Deepak, 2008. “How to Live a More Stress-Free Life.” <http://health.yahoo.com/experts/deepak/2546/how-to-live-a-more-stress-free-life/>

Some Monthly Content Adapted with permission from:

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