

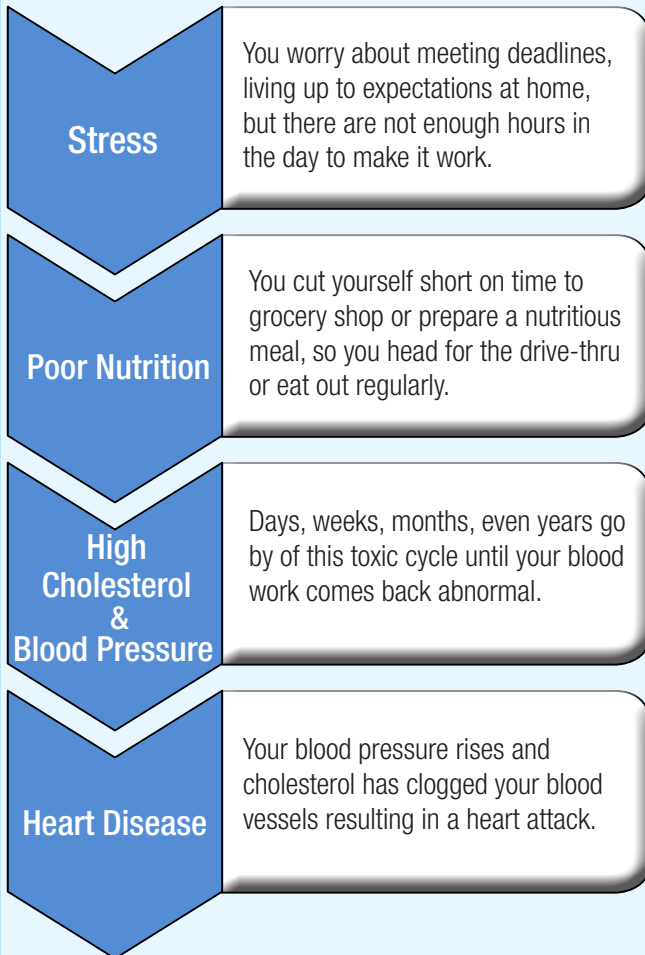
... FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

STRESS AND HEART DISEASE

CAN STRESS LEAD TO HEART DISEASE?

Yes.

Every year about **785,000** Americans have their first heart attack. Additionally, **470,000** who have already had one or more heart attacks have another attack.



WHAT STRESSES YOU OUT?

Identifying your stressors is an important piece in managing how they affect you. All stressors can be categorized into one of two types.

Internal: Stressors that you have control over.

Example: Unrealistic expectations, over analyzing

External: Things beyond your control.

Example: Traffic, major life event, rudeness

HOW DOES STRESS AFFECT YOU?

Stress presents itself differently depending upon the individual. Below are some common signs and symptoms of stress. Check all that apply to you.

Physical

- Chronic aches and pains
- Grinding or clenching teeth
- Indigestion or upset stomach
- Difficulty sleeping
- Weight gain or loss

Mental

- Constant worry
- Difficulty making decisions
- Forgetfulness
- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of creativity or sense of humor

Emotional

- Anger or anxiety
- Crying
- Depression
- Frequent mood swings
- Nervousness

Behavioral

- Bossiness
- Critical attitude of others
- Shortened temper
- Impulsive actions
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs

Speak with your Wellness Coach about how you can manage your stress. **Check with your employer** to see if an EAP (Employee Assistance Program) is available as a resource.

HEART HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

Eat and drink sensibly. Abusing alcohol and food may seem to reduce stress, but it actually adds to it. Eating a well balanced diet, including lots of fruits and vegetables that are high in fiber and limiting sodium, will contribute to lowering cardiac risk.

Stop smoking. You may reach for tobacco as a way to handle stress, but nicotine is a stimulant that is highly addictive and can exacerbate stress symptoms. *Are you wanting to quit?* Managing your stress can lessen dependence on tobacco and help you to quit for good.

Exercise regularly. Exercise has been shown to release endorphins, the brain chemical that decreases pain, reduces the negative effects of stress, and produces a natural high. Try stepping away from a stressful situation to take a brisk 10 minute walk. Aim for **20-30** minutes of moderate exercise **5-7** days per week.

Get adequate rest. Relax your body and your mind. Try progressive relaxation and deep breathing exercises as part of your night time ritual. Lower your bedroom temperature, take a warm shower, close window shades, read a book, and aim for **6-8** hours of continuous sleep per night.



THE 4 A's AND YOUR STRESS ACTION PLAN

Planning ahead can help you manage the stress in your life. **Break down your stressors into four types:**

ACCEPT

Realize you cannot change the situation.

Join a support group or vent to a friend.

ALTER

Change the stressor.

Be aware that you expect too much of yourself and adjust accordingly.

ADAPT

Change the way you respond to the stressor.

Ask yourself if you really want to spend energy being stressed about it.

AVOID

Stay away from what you know triggers you.

Leave 10 minutes earlier for work to avoid traffic.

Fill in your [Stress Plan](#) by listing a stressor, then checking the appropriate box to indicate whether it is one you can accept, alter, adapt to, or avoid. In the last column, plan how you will deal with the stressor using our tips or your own ideas. Try making a plan that focuses on just one stressor for this week. You can tackle more later on.

Stressor	Accept	Alter	Adapt	Avoid	How will you Deal with it?

RESOURCES

www.webmd.com

www.stress.org

www.medicinenet.com

For More Information visit
www.WellnessCoachesUSA.com

