



Supporting stress resilience: A whole person care approach

What is whole-person stress support?

Whole person care looks at how nutrition, movement, sleep, environment, and emotional well-being affect your ability to manage and recover from stress. Rather than focusing solely on symptoms like fatigue, this approach helps uncover the root causes of chronic stress and supports your nervous system in a personalized and sustainable way.

Step 1: Personalized assessment

Your provider may recommend assessments that evaluate the physical impact of stress and its downstream effects on body systems. A personalized and comprehensive laboratory evaluation could include the following types of tests:

Hormone testing



This helps assess the body's response to stress, especially how the adrenal glands (responsible for producing your stress hormones) are functioning. Using urine and/or saliva samples, these tests can help reveal short and long-term stress patterns.

Comprehensive stool analysis



Chronic stress can weaken the gut lining and disturb the balance of the gut microbiome, which may increase inflammation and affect mood and immunity. A stool analysis measures various markers that reflect the health of the intestinal lining and microbiome (the community of microorganisms that live in the gut).

Micronutrients



Stress can deplete important nutrients like magnesium, zinc, and iron. Identifying deficiencies helps guide nutritional support to reduce fatigue, improve mood, and strengthen the immune system.


Step 2: Lifestyle foundations for stress


Nutrition


What you eat can directly influence how your body and mind respond to stress. While stress can drive cravings for unhealthy comfort foods, adopting a nutrient-rich, whole-foods, and plant-based diet is linked to lower perceived stress levels and better emotional well-being.


Foods to eat

Fruits

Apples


Pears


Citrus


Bananas

Vegetables


Cruciferous


Broccoli


Cauliflower

Cabbage


Yellow


Bell pepper


Yellow Zucchini

Yellow turnip


Orange


Carrot


Sweet potato

Pumpkin


Red


Tomato


Red pepper


Red onion


Foods rich in magnesium

Nuts

Green vegetables


Seeds


Legumes


Whole grains


Foods and ingredients to avoid

Ultra-processed and fast foods


Chips


Oily food


Cereals


Ready meals

Added sugars


Condiments


Fruit juices


Sweets


Soda

Processed meats


Deli meat


Bacon


Sausages


Corned beef

Saturated and trans fats


Fried food

Commercially baked goods

Dairy products


Red meat

Salt



Limit daily sodium intake to less than 2,300 mg daily. To stay within this guideline, read food labels carefully and be aware of common sources of hidden sodium, such as deli sandwiches, pizza, burritos, burgers, soups, and packaged snack foods.

Alcohol



Drink in moderation by limiting yourself to no more than two (men) or one (women) drink(s) per day.

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Movement

Staying physically active and limiting inactivity can **improve stress, mood, and energy levels.**



Exercise at least **150 minutes weekly** by engaging in aerobic activities like walking, running, swimming, and cycling.



Incorporate **at least two sessions of strength training every week** by doing bodyweight exercises, lifting weights, or using resistance bands.



Practice yoga (e.g., Hatha or Vinyasa styles) as a form of meditative movement that synchronizes breath with motion and brings greater awareness to the physical and emotional body.



Avoid exercising too close to sleep, which can interfere with your ability to fall and stay asleep. Finish high-intensity workouts at least 2–4 hours before bedtime.



Types of aerobic exercise

Aerobic workouts can be performed at a moderate or vigorous intensity. Intensity can be measured using personal judgment, such as how hard you’re breathing, or specific tools such as heart rate monitors. For the most health benefits, try to incorporate various intensities into your routine.

Aerobic exercise				
	Moderate-intensity		Vigorous-intensity	
Target heart rate	40–60% of maximum heart rate*		60–85% of maximum heart rate*	
Perceived effort (on a scale of 1–10)	Level 5–8		Level 8–10	
Talking ability	Can talk but can't sing		Can't say more than a few words without pausing for a breath	
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biking• Boxing• Brisk walking• Climbing stairs• Dancing• Doubles tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gardening• Jumping on a trampoline• Hiking• Roller skating• Water aerobics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biking 10+ mph (16+ kph)• Endurance sports (e.g., basketball, soccer)• Jogging/running• Jumping rope	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rock climbing• Rowing• Swimming laps• Yard work (e.g., raking, shoveling)

*Age-related maximum heart rate can be calculated by subtracting your current age from 220. This calculation provides your maximum heart rate in beats per minute.



Different types of yoga



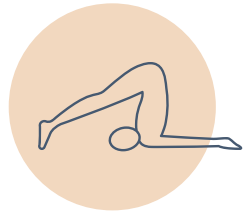
Hatha yoga

Hatha yoga is often used to describe basic yoga classes that are appropriate for beginners and that focus on alignment, strength, and flexibility.



Power yoga

Power yoga is an athletic form of yoga that builds strength and endurance through asanas and is sometimes practiced in a heated room.



Iyengar yoga

Iyengar yoga focuses on accessibility, and postures are modified to meet the needs of individuals with various levels of experience and ability, sometimes using props such as chairs, straps, and blankets.



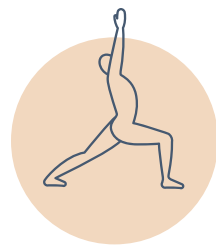
Kundalini yoga

Kundalini yoga is a dynamic form of yoga that is both physical and spiritual. Kundalini focuses on tuning in with your higher consciousness through pranayama, asanas, mantras, relaxation, and meditation.



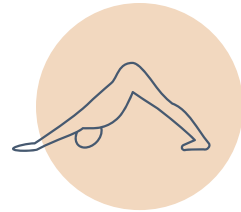
Yin yoga

Yin yoga is a slow and passive style of yoga with relatively accessible postures that are held for a minimum of 30 seconds. The focus of yin yoga is more on mindfulness than movement.



Vinyasa yoga

Vinyasa yoga is a moderate-intensity style of yoga that incorporates various traditional approaches. Postures flow from one to another, can vary from easy to difficult, and should be performed at the ability level that's appropriate to the individual.



Ashtanga yoga

Ashtanga yoga is an athletic style of yoga that involves synchronizing a series of postures with the breath. An instructor typically moves around the room, providing support and feedback to class participants.



Bikram yoga

Bikram yoga is a series of 26 specific yoga postures completed in a particular routine, accompanied by breathing exercises and performed in a room heated to 105°F (40.5°C).



Restorative yoga

Restorative yoga focuses on relaxation and breathing, and the positions utilize supportive props such as yoga blocks, straps, blankets, and bolsters in order to avoid discomfort and ensure very little strenuous movement or intense physical sensation.

Stress reduction



Practice stress-reduction techniques like mindfulness meditation, deep breathing, or yoga for at least 10–20 minutes daily.



Improve stress resilience by nurturing meaningful relationships and cultivating a strong sense of community.



If stress and overwhelm persist despite regular self-care, consider seeking additional emotional support through therapy or support groups.

Sleep

Too little or poor-quality sleep disrupts your nervous system and stress response, **leading to higher baseline cortisol levels (stress hormone) and increased sensitivity to daily stressors**. Over time, this can leave you feeling more anxious, emotionally reactive, and physically depleted.

Prioritizing these consistent sleep habits is an important step in both preventing and recovering from the harmful effects of stress:

Build a consistent sleep routine by going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, aiming for 7–9 hours of sleep each night.

Avoid drinking caffeine and alcohol and eating heavy meals later in the day, which can disrupt restorative sleep.

Expose yourself to morning sunlight and turn off electronic screens at least one hour before bed to help support your natural sleep-wake cycle.

Step 3: Targeted supplement support

Your healthcare provider may recommend supplements to support a healthy stress response and help manage the physical and emotional symptoms of stress. Examples include:


- **L-theanine:** Promotes relaxation and cognitive function without causing drowsiness
- **Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*):** Supports cortisol levels and helps decrease the physical and emotional symptoms of stress
- **Holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*):** Supports healthy cortisol levels and helps improve perception of stress

- **Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*):** Helps increase resilience to stress and support physical and emotional health
- **Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA):** Promotes relaxation and helps enhance sleep quality
- **Magnesium:** Supports the nervous system


Always consult your provider before starting new supplements, especially if pregnant, breastfeeding, or taking other medications or supplements. Supplement plans should be personalized and monitored over time.

Tracking stress patterns


Building self-awareness is a powerful first step in managing stress more effectively. By taking time to reflect on your daily experiences, you can begin to identify patterns, such as specific triggers or habits, that may be contributing to stress and recognize how your body responds.



Use a journal or app to track stressful triggers and symptoms like mood, fatigue, and poor sleep.




Pay attention to how your body responds to daily rhythms, caffeine, meals, and rest.





Biofeedback tools (like heart rate variability (HRV) trackers or guided breathing apps) can offer real-time insights into your stress responses.


Stress management apps


Guided breathing apps


 headspace

 Happify

 Calm

 Breath ball

 Breathly

 Paced Breathing

Final thoughts: You’re not alone

Managing stress is a lifelong skill, not a quick fix. **Whole person care offers a compassionate roadmap for restoring balance and building resilience.** Talk to your healthcare provider about testing, supplements, and lifestyle strategies tailored to your needs—and remember that small shifts can lead to lasting change.

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