

Physiotherapy Newsletter

December – Tips to Manage Stress

December tends to be a busy and stressful time of year with numerous social engagements and family responsibilities. The winter solstice (December 21st) marks the shortest day of the year and some people may find they feel a little blue around this time of year. Stress is a normal part of daily life and everyone experiences it to some degree, however, feeling overwhelmed with stress can lead to both physical and mental illness. Managing stress is therefore especially important when hectic schedules leave little time in a day. Stress is not caused by what happens to you in life, but by how you choose to respond to what happens. Some signs of stress include muscle tightness, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, appetite changes and headaches. Some people may feel frustrated, sad, worried or irritable. Taking the time to learn how to recognize signs of stress in your body and how to respond to stress in a different way can help you effectively manage your stress. Here are some basic tips to help you deal with stress.

- ✓ Eat a healthy and balanced diet, schedule your time to ensure you get enough sleep and pace your activities throughout the day.

- ✓ Manage your time effectively: make a list of everything you need to do in a day and set up a schedule. Recognize there are only so many hours in a day; decide what the most important tasks are, ask other people for help, and learn how to say no to prevent overextending yourself.

- ✓ Build time into your schedule to spend on an activity that you find relaxing i.e. go for a walk, exercise, yoga, meditation, progressive relaxation, read a book, watch television, listen to music, engage in a hobby, soak in tub, talk with friends and family, interact with a pet, and practice deep breathing.

- ✓ Spend a few minutes each day clearing your mind in a quiet place; focus your thoughts for a few minutes on a peaceful image or a happy thought.

- ✓ Deep breathing or belly breathing is easy to incorporate into your daily schedule and has been proven to be an effective strategy for managing stress. Simply put your hands on your belly and slowly take a deep breath in through your nose while allowing your belly to expand away from your spine. Slowly and in a controlled manner blow out your breath through your mouth. Repeat this process two or three times, several times throughout the day to promote relaxation.

To discuss how to recognize how your body responds to stresses in your life and to learn effective ways to deal with stress such as adapting to the stress, changing the stress or avoiding stress, please contact an occupational therapist at Limestone Health Consultants (<http://www.limestonehealth.ca/services-occupationaltherapy.cfm>)

The following examples are stretches that will help relieve stress. Hold each stretch for 15 to 20 seconds, remembering to stretch out both sides of your neck. Please consult with one of our physiotherapists for additional stretches to help stretch out your sore and tight muscles.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank you, our friends for allowing us to treat you during your time of need. It is truly an honour to work with such wonderful people. Best wishes to you and your family for a wonderful holiday season.

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