



5 QUICK WAYS TO MEASURE STRESS



In order to effectively manage stress, you must become aware of the amount and types of stressors in your everyday life. One way of developing awareness is to assess the frequency and amount of stress in your daily routine, and then trace the stress to its source (i.e., the stressor). Below is a list of five quick, easy ways of measuring stress in your daily life. These methods can be easily used any time and anywhere.

1. Check muscle tension by "Scanning"

When you scan, you are checking different muscles in your body as if you could X-ray each part and look for tension. Start at the top of your head and work your way down. Check your forehead, eyes, jaws (are you clenching your teeth?). Then move to your neck and shoulders and check for tension or pain. Next your arms, chest and stomach. Check your breathing to see if it is rapid and shallow rather than slow and deep. Scan your upper legs, calves and your feet and toes.

2. Check hand temperature

Place your hand on the side of your neck just above your collar. If your hand is noticeably cooler than your neck, your hand temperature indicates that your body is probably stressed.

3. Check for nervous sweating

Many people perspire when they are tense. This is an involuntary stress response that is caused by the secretion of certain stress hormones. This is yet another simple indicator that your body is responding to some stressor.

4. Check for a rapid pulse rate (> 75 bpm)

At rest, most people will have a pulse rate in the 50s or 60s. However, if your pulse rate is higher than 75 bpm, it may indicate that your body is responding to a stressor.

5. Check for rapid, shallow breathing

When people are relaxed, they breath slowly and deeply with relaxed stomach muscles. When people are tense, they often tighten their stomach muscles and breathe through their chests. Since the chest is not as expandable as the stomach, one will exhibit rapid, shallow, chest breathing. One technique for managing stress, is to learn to breathe in a more relaxed fashion. Relax the stomach and breathe in slowly, filling the stomach first and then the chest. Relax again as you exhale and repeat.

For Further Information:

Family Service Inc.
(605) 336-1974/800-589-1974