

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Relaxation techniques can help reduce the effects of too much stress in our day-to-day lives. Knowing which situations cause stress is the first step to managing it. Learning new relaxation techniques to help cope with stress is the next step. This will make your thoughts more calm and peaceful, and help you learn to relax. Being able to manage stress is important in living a healthy, happy and productive life.

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Mental

- Not being able to think clearly or concentrate.
- Worrying about little things.
- Difficulty sleeping (see *Sleeping Problems* Fact Card).
- Things seem to be more difficult.
- Having trouble making your mind up.
- A feeling that something dreadful is going to happen.

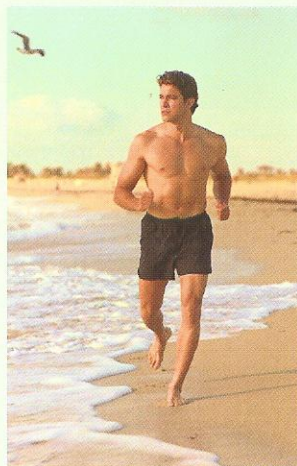
Physical

- fast heart beat
- chest pains
- tense muscles
- trembling, dizziness
- restlessness
- headache
- nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- flushing of the face or chest
- over-breathing, difficulty breathing
- sweating

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Visualisation

- Get comfortable. Imagine a soothing, restful scene (e.g. a quiet place in the bush).
- See yourself there, relaxed, peaceful and happy.



Muscle relaxation

- Lie down and close your eyes.
- Start to relax all the muscles in your body by tensing, then relaxing them.
- Begin with your toes and work up through your body so that every muscle feels light and relaxed.
- Stay lying down for 10-15 minutes and you'll feel the difference.

Deep breathing

- Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing... slow and deep, slow and deep.
- Clear your mind and only think about your breathing.
- After 10-15 minutes you will start to relax.

Meditation and yoga

- Many people find meditation and yoga helpful forms of relaxation.
- They aren't difficult but you will need someone to teach you these techniques.
- Join a class to learn how to do them.

Exercise

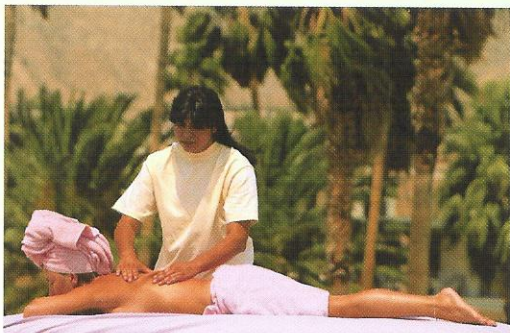
- Exercise regularly. This promotes physical fitness as well as emotional well-being.

- There is a form of exercise for everyone no matter what your age or ability.
- If you want to use exercise to get fit as well as relieve stress, you'll need a more active program. This could be 20-30 minutes of aerobic activity (e.g. walking, cycling) on most days of the week. (See *Exercise and the Heart* Fact Card)
- Exercise will improve your health and also help weight control.

Note: If you don't normally exercise, are more than 40 years of age, or are overweight, see your doctor for a medical check-up before starting an exercise program.

SELF CARE

- Take a warm shower or bath. This will soothe and calm you and relax your muscles.
- Talk out your troubles. It sometimes helps to talk with a friend or relative.
- Budget your time. Make a 'to do' list. Prioritise your daily tasks. Avoid over-commitment.
- Learn acceptance. Sometimes a difficult problem is out of your control. When this happens, accept it until changes can be made.
- Reward yourself. Starting today, reward yourself with little things that make you feel good e.g. a massage or facial.
- Balance work and play. Plan time for hobbies. These will relax your mind and are a good escape from life's worries.
- Learn to say no to jobs that put you under too much pressure.



Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

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*Pharmacy Self Care has a strong commitment to providing current and reliable health information.
The information in this card was current at time of printing.*

- Learn to recognise what's worth worrying about and what's not.
- Do one thing at a time – don't try to do everything at once.
- Planning helps take the stress out of situations – don't leave things to the last minute.
- Try to cut down on cigarettes and alcohol - these can make stressful situations seem worse.
- Reduce your intake of caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate and cola drinks). Too much caffeine is stimulating and will prevent you relaxing.
- Remember to laugh and smile! Laughter makes our muscles go limp and releases tension and pressure. When events seem overwhelming, try to keep a sense of humour.

Recommended reading

EVANS, B, COMAN, G, & BURROWS, G
Your Guide to Understanding and Managing Stress.
Adis 1999 (available from Mental Health Foundation of Australia - see below)

Other relevant Fact Cards

- *Anxiety*
- *Depression*
- *Sleeping Problems*
- *Exercise & the Heart*

Contact

Your doctor – listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book

Your local Community Health Centre – listed under C in the white pages of the phone book

Mental Health Foundation of Australia

270 Church St
RICHMOND Vic 3121
Ph (03) 94270406
<http://mentalhealthvic.org.au>

Australian Psychological Society

(03) 9663 6166
or write to: PO Box 126
CARLTON SOUTH Vic 3053

Your Self Care pharmacist. To find: (02) 6283 4777.

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

93-23449-00112

