

Fall break has passed and you're headed to the final exam stretch. It's 8:00 am, you're late for class and you down 2 cups of coffee to wake up from the all nighter last night. Your body aches but you push on knowing the term paper's done. Now all you face is 2 final projects, 3 comprehensive finals and you're done until next semester when it starts all over again. Sound familiar? Most college students carry on a balancing act between academic, social, and family responsibilities . . . which can lead to stress!

## Stress is more than just a feeling . . .

For people of all ages, stress is on the rise and college students are not exempt. Stress is a major cause of illness. It has been estimated that 75-90% of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress related problems.<sup>1</sup> Stress has an impact on diet, sleep patterns and activity all of which affect your health. Your body responds to stress in many different ways. Chronic stress is related to serious health problems such as:

- heart disease
- stroke
- decreased immune function
- gastrointestinal problem
- changes in appetite, pain (headaches and muscular pain)
- insomnia
- sexual dysfunction
- loss of memory
- irritability and
- tension just to name a few.<sup>2</sup>

All of these problems can zap your energy and interfere with your ability to get it all done.

## Move to Manage Your Stress

### **SIMPLIFY:**

Consider all the things you do and decide what you can do without. Chances are you are over-committed and saying "no" to just one or two things could reduce your stress level.

### **TAKE CONTROL:**

Prioritize your schedule and decide what parts of your life are most important and which parts need less attention. Set realistic goals by turning your focus to what you can do instead of feeling guilty over what you do not have time to do.

### **RELAX AND GET ENOUGH REST:**

Make time to slow down . . . even if it's just a few minutes close your eyes, watch a sunset or take a few deep breaths. Try to get your zzzz's each night (7-8 hours). Regular sleep rhythms leave you rested and ready to tackle the day.

### **EAT A BALANCED DIET AND REGULAR MEALS OR SNACKS:**

Eating well gives you energy and boosts your immune system. Mix your menu from a variety of nutrient-rich foods found in your café's. You may be tempted to skip when you are busy but eating, even on the run, is important. Eating habits can really make or break your ability to handle stress: heavy, fat-laden lunches make for lethargic afternoons, while caffeine and sugar can put your energy cycle on a roller coaster ride.

### **SHARE YOUR FEELINGS:**

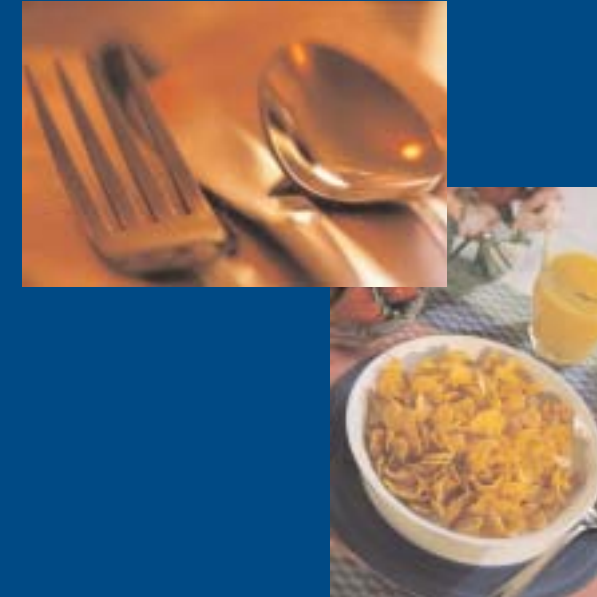
Laughing and talking with others allows you to vent and reduce stress. Laughing has also been shown to reduce stress, pain and improve immune function so show those pearly whites!

### **SHAKE IT UP WITH ACTIVITY:**

Regular activity is good for emotional as well as physical health. Any type of activity can reduce stress, improve sleep and improve mood by allowing your body to release endorphins that can reduce anxiety.<sup>3</sup> Try for 30 minutes of activity each day and the good news is, it does not have to be at one time! Short bouts of activity that add up are beneficial.

1. The American Institute of Stress—[www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org)
2. National Institute of Mental Health—[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
3. Smolin, Lori A, Grosvenor. Nutrition and Science Application. Saunders College Publishing: New York, 1994.
4. Duyff, Roberta. The ADA Complete Food & Nutrition Guide. Chronimed Publishing: Minneapolis, MN, 1996.
5. Source: Food and Drug Administration, National Soft Drink Association and National Coffee Association of USA.

# Surviving under Pressure

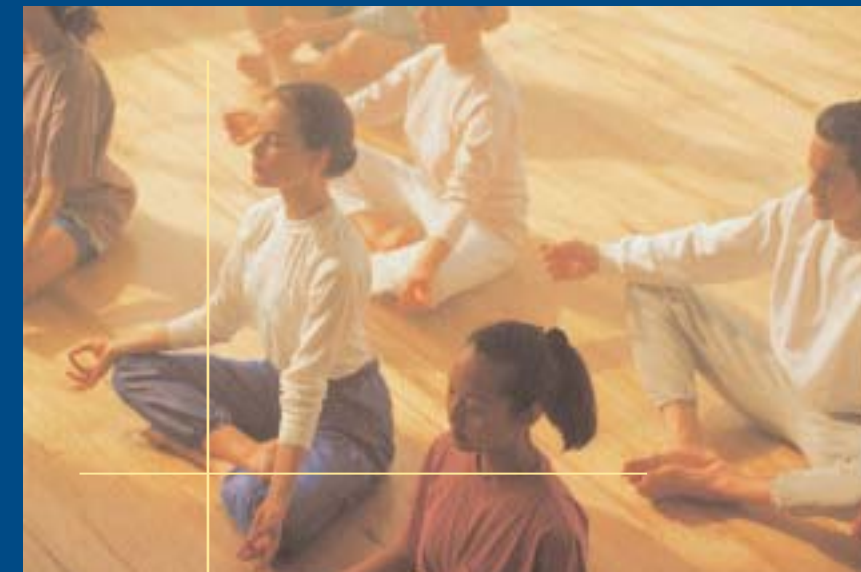


This information is not intended to take the place of advice from a health care professional. Check with your physician before starting any diet or exercise program.

In addition, while all efforts have been made to ensure the information included in this material is correct, new research that is released frequently, may invalidate certain pieces of data.

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BON APPÉTIT



# Stress and Your Nutrition

Appetite, food preferences and even cravings are affected by your emotions including those brought on by stress. In fact, in times of stress, balance with food is often first to suffer. In reality, eating a balanced diet will help you weather the stress by energizing your body and keeping your immune system ready for action. Choosing a variety of grains, fruits, vegetables and lean meats from the selections in your café will be the best odds diet to combat the effects of stress.

Remember your balance when it come to food that will provide all the nutrients you need to energize your body. In addition, you may consider adding a general multivitamin to ensure all your bases are covered.

No matter your stress level there are some simple things that can help keep you on track:



**Strive for regular meals and/or snacks.** Your café provides many options even when you are in a hurry. Take time to notice the grab-and-go choices so when your in a crunch you know what to do.

**Have quick back-ups.** Purchase an extra meal you can reheat quickly or keeping soups, fruits or meal replacement bars in your room . . . be prepared in the event you get too busy to make it to the café.

**Make time for breakfast.** Breakfast is important even if it's not the minute your feet hit the floor. Aim to eat something within two hours of getting up for a burst of energy for the day.

## Take charge of your comfort foods:

How do you resist the urge to turn to your “comfort foods” . . . ice cream, mashed potatoes and gravy, home cooked desserts or whatever soothes your palette? Good news is you don't have to resist, but do try to become more aware of how you use these foods. Loading up on high fat, high sugar or high calorie foods can be comforting in times of stress, but relying on these too much can leave you feeling drained because you are not getting the nutrition that you need.

- ✓ Try a low fat ice cream, yogurt or sherbet topped with fruit or granola for a sweet treat.
- ✓ For the cookie monster, choose oatmeal-raisin, vanilla wafers, ginger snaps, devils food cookies or graham crackers for a healthier option.

- ✓ In the salty arena, popcorn, pretzels or baked chips with spicy mustard or salsa might do the trick.
- ✓ For a chocolate treat, try chocolate frozen yogurt, pudding, hot chocolate or chocolate graham crackers.
- ✓ For balance, add vegetables and fruit to traditional meals like lasagna, meat loaf, mashed potatoes, pasta, meat and grain dishes.
- ✓ Use pureed fruits such as applesauce, prunes, bananas in the place of 1/2 the fat in recipes like muffins, pancakes and quick breads.

When you want the “real thing”, go for it but use common sense. Keep portions reasonable and do not replace healthy food choices 100% of the time.

## CAFFEINE CONTENT of Popular Foods and Beverages<sup>5</sup>

	Average Caffeine (mg)
Coffee (5-ounce serving)	
Brewed, drip	115
Brewed, percolator	80
Instant	65
Decaffeinated, brewed	3
Decaffeinated, instant	2
Espresso (2 ounces)	100
Tea (5-ounce serving)	
Brewed, U.S. brands	40
Brewed, imported	60
Instant	30
Iced (12-ounce glass)	70
Decaffeinated	1
Soft drinks with caffeine	35
Chocolate milk (8 ounces)	5
Hot chocolate (5 ounces)	5
Chocolate (1 ounce serving)	
Milk	5
Dark chocolate	20
Bakers chocolate	25
Chocolate syrup	4

# Caffeine and Sugar . . . the Relationship to Stress

Does stress make you turn to caffeine and sugar? Although these ingredients may seem to help you cope with stress, think about the bigger picture . . .

## CAFFEINE

Caffeine is a chemical that occurs naturally in many plants such as coffee, cocoa beans and tea leaves but is also added to a variety of products like soft drinks, power drinks, and more than 1000 over-the-counter medications.<sup>4</sup> It is a mild central nervous system stimulant thus many college students use it for a “boost of energy” to start the day or get through a long night.

So, what are it's effects on health? Still very controversial, caffeine has been studied for it's connection to cancer, heart disease, fibrocystic breast disease, birth defects, and attention deficit disorder. However, few studies have been able to link caffeine to any problems beyond dehydration, anxiety and insomnia which can certainly drag you down during crunch time!

If you tend to experience any negative symptoms because

of caffeine intake, consider cutting back — but do it gradually. Going cold turkey can cause withdrawal headaches.

You can reduce caffeine in your diet! Aim for 200 mg or less of caffeine each day.

- **Try mixing half regular and half decaffeinated coffee in your café.** Gradually move to decaffeinated or use regular for one cup and choose decaffeinated for any additional coffee during the day.
- **Brew tea for a shorter time.** A tea bag in water for 1 minute will have half the caffeine of tea brewed for 3 minutes.
- **If you sip all day long out of habit . . . keep water handy as a substitute.** Beware of some of the “designer” waters . . . some actually have added caffeine.
- **Check your soft drinks.** Although colas tend have caffeine, color is not always an indicator of caffeine content. Check the ingredient list for your beverages to make sure caffeine is not an additive.

## SUGAR

Sugar is a form of carbohydrate that digests very quickly to blood glucose which is the energy used to fuel the cells of our body. Sugars come in many forms including table sugar, honey, corn syrup, pancake syrup, brown sugar, molasses, jam, jelly, turbinado sugar. It is a common misperception that some sugars are more nutritious than others, but surprisingly they all nourish the body in the same way . . . providing about 16 calories per teaspoon.

During stressful times, many college students find they are apt to skip meals. When you do get hungry, it is easy to reach for the “quick energy” sugar provides. However, keep in mind sugar is not only digested quickly but it signals the body to produce insulin to help use or store sugars quickly as well. Thus sugars will not provide a long lasting source of energy.

Sugar in moderation is part of a healthy diet but for long lasting energy and the best nutritional value . . .

**Get your “carbs” from more whole grain foods.** Your café

offers a wide variety of grains, breads and beans throughout the day so choose these more complex carbohydrates at most meals and snacks for longer lasting energy.

**Go for the sweet flavor of fruit or fruit juice.** Unlike many other sugars, fructose or fruit sugar also comes packaged with other nutrients such as Vitamins A and C as well as folic acid, potassium and fiber. Try frozen juices, bananas, or grapes for a refreshing snack.

**Go light with added sugars on cereals, French toast or pancakes.** Use just a sprinkle of sugar when you need it or try some cinnamon and fruit as an alternative topping.

**Control calories with trade-offs.** Have dessert at lunch, opt for fruit at dinner. For a double treat, eat a bite or two and enjoy desserts more often.

Stress can also come from trying to make healthy food choices in situations such as restaurants, fast food, special occasions and during travel. Watch for tips this month on how to handle food choices when you are out of the normal routine.

Keep in mind stress is a normal part of life. You are not going to be able to escape stress but with some attention to your diet, exercise and planning . . . you **CAN** manage stress!