



# STRESS



## No friend to the sperm or egg

Stress is the way we respond to change. Stress can be good. Think about how winning a lottery might boost your senses. Some people like the feeling of stress and thrill they get from a roller coaster ride or a white-water rafting trip. Yet stress does not always end in this feeling of cheerful excitement. When stressed, our breathing speeds up, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises and our heart pounds faster. The body's reaction to endless stress is puzzling. Both body and mind have limits where stress can become harmful.

Stress could mean the difference between being able to get pregnant or not. Over time, stress can change a woman's biological clock - her menstrual cycles and the timing of an egg being released. In men, stress can play with hormone levels and with the amount of sperm they produce. These changes are short-term and can be turned around once stress is controlled.

### *Your life*

Everyone reacts to stress differently. Understanding how stress affects you is the first step in learning how to manage it.

### *I know I am stressed when...*

- ❖ I feel worried or anxious.
- ❖ I get sick more often.
- ❖ I sleep too much or have trouble sleeping.
- ❖ I can't concentrate or make decisions.
- ❖ I have an unexplained physical problem like headaches, diarrhea or heart flutters.

- ❖ I am too sensitive (I cry or have angry outbursts).
- ❖ I am sad or irritable.
- ❖ My mind wanders throughout the day.
- ❖ My appetite changes.
- ❖ I am unusually tired.
- ❖ I feel restless.
- ❖ I take alcohol, medications or other drugs to relax.
- ❖ Other:

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Your "stress quiz" answers might be a sign that your stress level is too high for your health and well being. You can find ways to manage stress. Below, fill in some that would work for you. Plan to relax!



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## *When I feel stressed I can....*

Go for a walk with: \_\_\_\_\_

Read a good book or magazine such as: \_\_\_\_\_

Listen to this music: \_\_\_\_\_

Talk to these friends: \_\_\_\_\_

Relax by doing: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## *What is most important in your life?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Things that stress me most: \_\_\_\_\_

If I can change them, this is how: \_\_\_\_\_

If I can't change them, this is what I can do: \_\_\_\_\_

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

Social worker: \_\_\_\_\_

Family counsellor: \_\_\_\_\_

Psychologist: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Assistance Program at your workplace: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Did health make your list?*

Finding a balance in life can help us manage stress. Look at your family and work situation and find new ways to share roles or tasks, or learn to make the most of things you can't change. Make changes in your life to decrease stress before pregnancy. Chronic stress along with the lack of social support is related to a baby being born too early or too small.