



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:

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.