



Understanding and Dealing with Stress

Quick Fixes to Physical Effects of Stress:

Relax - Upper Body

Telling someone to relax is often easier said than done, but sometimes we hold a lot of our tension in our body and muscles. Shaking out a few of those kinks and curves in your body may make dealing with the kinks and curves life throws you a little easier.

Remember that these exercises are meant to help you relax and are just suggestions. Do not feel pressure to do all of them. Do not do any exercise that feels painful or uncomfortable. If you have any physical problems or disabilities, you should check with your doctor, nurse, or physical therapist.

When doing any exercise (even 'relaxation' exercises), don't push yourself too hard. After all, that's not relaxing! And, always use correct posture, move slowly and cautiously, and get the most from each exercise.

Hands, arms and shoulders



- Hands - bend and straighten fingers several times to increase blood flow
- Hands - let fingers and hands hang loosely from your wrists; gently shake hands
- Hands - clench your fists and curl your wrists inward; curl your wrists back; rotate fists in circles
- Arms - straighten your arms against your sides and press tightly; release; repeat
- Arms - gently bend arms at the elbows (as though lifting imaginary weights); repeat several times to increase blood flow to arms
- Arms and shoulders - if you can (and it's comfortable), raise your arms above your head and grasp your hands together; stretch toward the sky; bring your arms back to your sides and try to reach behind you, clasping hands; feel your chest expand and stretch your shoulders and arms; repeat
- Shoulders - with your arms at your side, lift your shoulders high (toward your ears) and then release; repeat
- Shoulders - if you can (and it's comfortable), keep your arms at your side and roll your shoulder in forward circles; stop after several rotations and switch directions

Head, neck and face



- Face - wiggle your face! raise and lower your eyebrows; puff out your cheeks; relax your jaw (these exercises are best done in private or to entertain small children)
- Face - gently massage your ears: pull down gently on your ear lobes and massage them; release and gently grab your entire ear, gently rotating it in small circles
- Head and neck - without moving your shoulders or spine, look to the left; look to the right; look up raising your chin gently no more than three inches; look down; repeat; stop at any point if this doesn't feel comfortable or becomes painful
- Head and neck - close your eyes and let your head slowly fall forward; slowly roll your head to the right then to the left; don't pull or strain; repeat as necessary; stop at any point if this doesn't feel comfortable or becomes painful