Living With Cancer

Managing Stress When You Have Cancer

A cancer diagnosis, whether yours or a loved one's, can cause a lot of stress. There's so much to learn about the disease and potential treatments and their side effects; sometimes, managing treatment symptoms is a full-time job. But you need to care for yourself, and not just physically, although stress can have intense physical symptoms too. Take time to tend to your whole being—body, mind and soul.

Meditation has been scientifically proved to relieve stress and depression. Sit comfortably and let your thoughts go, focusing on steady, rhythmic breathing. Try practicing meditation along with other relaxation methods, such as visualization or tensing and releasing individual muscles. You can also use guided meditations; many are available as free audio downloads or podcasts. You might also search for meditation or mindfulness groups in your area.

Yoga or tai chi can ease aching muscles and help clear your thoughts. Affordable drop-in tai chi or yoga classes may be available in your area. YouTube is a good resource for free classes for any level of fitness and experience.

A little physical exertion can do a lot of good when it comes to relieving stress. Take a long walk or a few short ones. Think of exercise as a "moving meditation," bringing awareness away from the mind and into the body. Plus, the endorphins your body releases act as a natural mood booster. You can engage in physical activity while spending time with a friend, listening to soothing music or taking in the sounds of your environment.

Eating well can help you build a better foundation to handle the stressors that come with cancer and its treatment, whether yours or a loved one's. Constant anxiety can affect your immune system; help keep it strong with a balanced diet that's both nutrient-rich and emotionally nourishing. Your body also needs plenty of sleep to recharge, though anxiety can make it difficult to rest. Breathing exercises can be especially effective just before bedtime, as can herbal teas like chamomile—though be sure to check with your medical team before taking any supplements or other complementary remedies.

Remember that you're not alone. Reach out to friends, join a support group and stay active in your community. Joining a crafting group or a book club can keep your mind focused on something other than worries, and multiple studies show a connection between good mental health and social

interaction. If needed, consider therapy or counseling to discuss deeper, more intense issues.

10 Tips to Reduce Stress

Be aware. Recognizing the signs of stress can help you identify its source and how to ease it.

Eat a balanced diet. Nourish your body and mind with foods that are tasty and rich in nutrients.

Keep busy. Distract yourself with crossword puzzles, reading and crafts like knitting. Not enough energy to concentrate? Try a movie or an audiobook.

Move your body. A walk or some yoga can help calm your mind and dispel anxious thought patterns.

Meditate. Having trouble clearing your mind? Try a free guided meditation app— just five minutes a day can be powerful.

Ask for help. Talk to your medical care team, connect with support services online or in person and lean on loved ones.

Socialize. Stay active in your community: Visit friends, volunteer, take a class or attend religious services.

Keep a journal. Get your thoughts out of your head and onto paper.

Be kind to yourself. Give yourself permission to experience all your emotions and feelings.

Rest. Your body needs extra care when you’re stressed, so don’t push yourself too hard and make sure to get enough sleep.

Last Reviewed: January 16, 2019

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http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/basics/health-basics/managing-stress-cancer