

Wellness in your Life

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Volume 2, Issue 7 November, 2008

Holidays Are Here Again

Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays can be a time for mixed feelings. We want to have the enjoyment of being with family and friends in a festive time of celebration.

At the same time, we can feel so much added stress with pressures to put on meals and entertain guests, not to mention trying to buy gifts during hectic shopping days.

The book **Immune Power** by Jon Kaiser, M.D. (St. Martins Press, 1993) lists eight components for a healthy immune system: diet; nutrients; herbs; exercise; natural medicine; relaxation; emotional support; and meaning and purpose in your life.

This issue looks at stress and what it can do to our bodies and our health.

Stress overall is neither bad or good. In the big picture stress just means change and some change is necessary. But sometimes we don't deal with

change easily, and that causes negative consequences..

One way for dealing with stress is to stay healthy in the first place. Developing a good plan, paying attention to the things Dr. Kaiser lists can not only reduce negative stress but can also reduce health care expenses, which could be a further reduction in stress.

Building a good support system is another important ingredient in stress reduction. Exercise and proper nutrition are always necessary for a healthy body and these components are also important in reducing stress.

To stay healthy physically Dr. Cheney often says all you need is "air, light, water, vitamins, minerals, and protein. But to stay healthy mentally and emotionally you also need what the Beatles song suggests "All you need is love." If you don't have the mental and emotional fitness you won't have physical health. And physical health contributes to mental and emotional health.

Calendar of Events

Nov. 2 - Daylight Savings ends

Nov. 27 -28 - Office closed for Thanksgiving

Dustin S. Cheney, D.C., D.A.B.C.I.

As a health care provider people often believe that it is my job to “fix” their problems, “eliminate” their pain, and “cure” their disease. As easy as that sounds, no doctor can do all those things for all people.

In fact, the word doctor means teacher. It means that as a physician, a healer, a teacher, my job is to show you better ways to care for your body.

Often, chiropractic manipulation (what we call adjustments) make a significant impact on a person’s overall health whether it be pain resolution, recovery from illness, or affecting a person’s emotional health (called a psycho-somatic response).

Sometimes we need more. Sometimes illness is due to lifestyle habits (like smoking or over-eating), sometimes its due to genetics, and sometimes its due to stress, intrinsic (that which we create for ourselves) and extrinsic (that which other forces create).

In the end, my job as a doctor is to teach you how to manage the physical, physiological, environmental, nutritional, and social stresses that occur in this thing we exist in called Life. You, like me, deserve the best and that is why we continue to strive for “**Wellness in your Life**”.

**Welcome to Bruce
Anderson, D.C.**

Dr. Bruce Anderson will be joining the Chiropractic Centers of Phillipsburg, Stockton and Hill City mid-November. He will be a welcome addition to our growing practice and we look forward to his added expertise. We have known him for eight years and we look forward to entrusting him to the care of our patients. Coming here from Joplin, Missouri, Dr. Anderson is excited about experiencing small town living.



Dr. Steven Kloster

On October 23rd, we lost a great serviceman for Chiropractic. My friend, Dr. Steven Kloster, of Smith Center passed away. Dr. Kloster had served Northwest Kansas faithfully as a doctor, leader in the Kansas Chiropractic Association, and in his community and church. As a good and faithful servant, he will be greatly missed.

The Effects of Stress

We often view stress problems as something relating to emotional or mental situations. Physical stress, such as overwork or physical exertion or trauma, can also cause stress related health problems.

But what does stress actually do to our bodies? Why should we be concerned about stress in the first place?

Stress can cause such conditions as fatigue, chronic headaches, irritability, changes in appetite, memory loss, low self-esteem, withdrawal, tooth-grinding, cold hands, high blood pressure, shallow breathing, nervous twitches, lowered sexual drive, insomnia and other changes in sleep patterns and gastrointestinal disorders.

Stress also creates an excellent breeding ground for many of the major illnesses (as many as 80 percent of all major illnesses) like: cardiovascular disease, cancer, endocrine and metabolic disease, skin disorders, and infectious ailments. Many psychiatrists believe the majority of back problems - one of the most common adult ailment - are related to stress.

Dr. Hans Eysenck of the University of London, maintains that chronic, unmanaged stress was six times more predictive of cancer and heart disease than cigarette smoking, high cholesterol levels, and elevated blood pressure.

In the same report, Dr. Eysenck found people who were not able to manage their stress effectively, had a 40 percent greater chance of death than those who were "unstressed."

And a report in the **Archives of Internal Medicine** (157, Oct. 27, 1997) found that people with heart disease had a 74 percent reduction in cardiac "events"

like death, bypass operations, and heart attacks, if they had stress-management training.

Other physiological effects found to have stress contributors are increased secretion of adrenaline, elevation of blood pressure, acceleration of heartbeat, greater tension in muscles, digestion slowed or stopped, fats and sugars released from stores in the body, cholesterol levels raised, composition of blood changes slightly which can lead to more clotting increasing the risk of stroke or heart attack.

It also can cause the pituitary gland to increase production of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) which stimulates the release of cortisone and cortisol which then inhibits the functioning of disease-fighting white blood cells and suppresses the immune response.

Increasing the production of the adrenal hormones can lead to various nutritional deficiencies. These deficiencies can cause the body to step up its metabolism of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates to quickly produce energy for the body to use. This causes the body to excrete more amino acids, potassium and phosphorus while depleting stored magnesium and not allowing as much calcium to be stored.

The body does not absorb other ingested nutrients very well while under stress conditions. This results in the body being unable to utilize nutrients properly and unable to replace them adequately.

Checking for nutritional deficiencies may help determine if stress is a problem. If stress is a known problem, then deficiencies may need to be supplemented to maintain proper health.

Stress: The Good, Bad and Ugly

Stress can cause some major problems with our health - if we let it get out of hand. But not all stress is bad. In fact, some stress is necessary for us to function properly. Stress is really a general term used to talk about change in our lives.

For most, it's not the stress that causes hurt, it's our reaction to stress. It's our methods of dealing with it that may cause health problems.

Short spurts of stress are actually beneficial to our immune system. In short term stress responses such as the "fight or flight" condition, the immune system releases a number of substances such as the adrenal hormones epinephrine, nor-epinephrine, and cortisol, in addition to other hormones, peptides, etc. In the "fight or flight" response, these hormones are released to fight off the possibility of infections or injury such as bites and scrapes.

Short amounts of stress can also make a person more productive when deadlines occur or if you have a short term threat that requires immediate action. An example might be that you have a project that needs to be completed by a certain time. The deadline is closing in and you need to get it done. Your stress levels goes up, creating higher adrenaline secretions and a burst of activity. You get the job done and everything is fine.

The problem of stress comes in when we let it get out of control or when it goes on for an excessive amount of time. In the example above, besides a burst of activity, you obsess and get anxious about whether you will get done or whether it will turn out okay. And when

the job is done, you worry about whether it is acceptable and whether the boss will like it or not. You don't put the project behind you and move on. Then your short term stress needed for productivity turns into a problem that will affect your immune system and lead to other conditions.

One effect of long term, chronic stress may elicit prolonged secretion of the hormone cortisol, to which white blood cells counter with a down grading of cortisol receptors. This in turn reduces the cells' capacity to respond to anti-inflammatory signals and allows inflammatory processes to flourish. These can contribute to increasing excessive non-specific inflammation of diseases like multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, or coronary heart disease.

Studies have shown that chronic stressors reliably diminish the immune system's capacity to produce antibodies following routine influenza vaccinations. It is still unclear as to whether that increases the likelihood of getting the flu.

The trouble with dealing with stress issues is that we don't all react the same. One FedEx Kinko's® commercial airing on television shows the boss stating a report needs to be printed and bound by 8 a.m. One employee panics, exclaims they will have to be up all night and begins drinking the pot of coffee to prepare (pouring half of the coffee down his shirt). The other employee looks at him calmly and says she sent the data to FedEx Kinko's® and it will be delivered in the morning. One person goes into a stress reaction while the other stays calm.

Stress (continued)

It's not the stress that is the problem, but our reaction to it.

Why one person reacts differently to another is hard to predict. Some generalized patterns have been documented, starting with studies by Hans Selye and confirmed by others.

Stress generally goes in three stages. Stage 1 is the typical short term, "fight or flight" reaction. Most often this comes about because of some physical stress such as a car accident or being attacked by a dog. But it can also be triggered if you are called upon to give a presentation or testify in court, etc.

In stage 1, the stress reaction is a temporary, emergency response followed by the relaxation response to bring the body by to a normal state.

Stage 2 is when the body no longer needs a short term response, but more of a continuous coping response. Large amounts of stress hormones, especially cortisol, will continue to be secreted over long periods of time.

Cortisol is the necessary hormone that make the "fight or flight" response work. It is a steroid hormone produced by the adrenal glands that will stimulate the release of fats, glucose, and amino acids for energy output. It helps control excessive inflammation around potential wounds, maintain blood pressure and connective tissue. It will control blood sugar levels, focus concentration and produce a sense of well-being.

Normally cortisol production is greatest in the morning and decreases to its lowest level around midnight. After an emergency situation, cortisol should start decreasing within three or four hours.

Under prolonged stress however, cortisol levels remain elevated, and even into

the night. This can contribute to insomnia and sleep disorders. If cortisol levels remain too high, the brain eventually loses its sensitivity to regulating its production.

If that happens it can cause the body to produce even more cortisol and reduce production of DHEA which is needed to build tissue.

One result of this is called Cushing's syndrome. A British physician, Sir Harvey Cushing, found a link between abdominal obesity, hypertension, weakness and fatigability, glucose in the urine (diabetes), osteoporosis, amenorrhea (absence of menstrual bleeding), hirsutism (excessive body hair in women) and purplish abdominal striae (stretch marks).

Many of these conditions are becoming epidemic in our society today.

The third stage of the stress process is the exhaustion stage. This stage is where the body actually begins to break down, and the risk of chronic disease increases dramatically. It is sometimes referred to as adrenal exhaustion.

The severe form of adrenal exhaustion that is rare, is known as Addison's disease. However, millions of American's are suffering from a milder form of adrenal exhaustion because of chronic stress levels.

Adrenal exhaustion is often seen as being "burned out" mentally, physically, or emotionally. Those with adrenal exhaustion often feel very tired, have low blood sugar and may need a snack every two or three hours to prevent a drop in blood sugar.

Additionally they may experience memory loss, cloudy thinking, problems with concentrating and episodes of confusion. Depression often exists.

Stress (continued)

Recurrent infections of all types, along with allergies (both environmental and food), chemical sensitivities, and immune system impairment may be problems.

In the exhaustion stage, people are more prone to autoimmune diseases such as Hashimoto's thyroiditis, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, or multiple sclerosis. They often lose muscle mass, gain fat, and suffer digestive problems. Inadequate production of hydrochloric acid and pancreatic enzymes can lead to heartburn, bloating and gas.

Chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, irregular menstrual periods, hormonal imbalances, severe PMS, loss of sex drive, irritable bowel syndrome, and psychiatric disorders are possible.

Individuals in the exhaustion stage are also more prone to develop Alzheimer's disease and cancer.

Unfortunately, many physicians do not recognize adrenal exhaustion as a real condition and do not treat it. They may offer antidepressants as their only attempt at a treatment.

Some individuals then turn to alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to self-medicate their "feelings." Many feel stuck in a rut and don't know what else to do.

Our natural system to protect us from emergency situations, has turned into a problem of horrendous proportions.

What can we do about stress?

Since one of the conditions chronic stress creates is a diminishing of our immune system, working on building up the immune system is important. The first line of defense for the immune system is through a balanced diet and plentiful vitamins and minerals.

One dietary approach may be to start with an elimination or rotation diet to

check if food allergies might be contributing to physiological responses. Eating more fruits and vegetables helps to build the immune system along with antioxidant vitamins of C and E.

Check with your health care professional who knows nutrition to help you determine which foods and nutrients would be most helpful in "taming" your adrenal system while building up your immune system. Other antioxidants that might be helpful are beta-carotene, selenium, and glutathione. SAMe (S-Adenosylmethionine) is a supplement that has antidepressant properties. Vitamin B complex with extra B6, B12, and pantothenic acid also helps with the proper functioning of the nervous system.

Since calcium and magnesium is lost or deficient under high stress conditions, you might want to check these levels for supplementation along with Co-Q10 and melatonin.

Some of the herbs that may be helpful with stress conditions are ashwagandha, bilberry, ginkgo biloba, milk thistle, catnip, chamomile, dong quai, and valerian among others.

Don't skip breakfast. Not eating the first meal makes it harder to maintain blood sugar levels. In general limit caffeine. Switching from coffee to green tea reduces the caffeine and going to decaf green tea could be even better.

Carry healthful snacks and munchies like carrot sticks, edamame (soy beans), sunflower seeds, celery sticks, etc. with you to stabilize blood sugar levels.

An excellent way of reducing stress is through exercise. Exercise programs such as yoga and Tai Chi are "mindful" and relaxing, but aerobic and anaerobic exercises are also helpful in reducing muscle tension, taking your focus off

Stress (continued)

your other problems, and getting your body back into proper function.

There are books full of stress management tips that can help different people in different ways.

Try some soft music and/or aromatherapy. Oils of anise, basil, bay, chamomile, eucalyptus, lavender, peppermint, rose and thyme are especially soothing. Combine the soft music with aromatherapy and soothing oils in a full body massage.

Try getting your feelings out into the public through blogging or “twittering” or keep them private in a journal. Reading poetry is also calming.

A few more unconventional stress relieving activities may be “cleaning.” Clean a room, a drawer, or take on your house. You can combine physical activity, diverting your thinking and a sense of accomplishment when your done.

Gardening is another excellent activity to focus your thoughts and energies into something else. This will also give you the advantage of working with nature.

Play with kids. Any kind of play will usually suffice but you might get more bonuses if you have to run or roll

on the ground, knead clay or use finger paint. If your kids are grown, see if you can “borrow” the grand kids, or the neighbors’ or friends’.

“Sing out loud.” Loud vocalization helps release tensions from your body, and music can therapeutically take your mind off your troubles.

Maybe the best stress reducer is building a social support network. Studies are showing that support groups are beneficial for just about everything from breast cancer groups to ADHD groups.

A social support network is a little different in that it is mad up of friends, family and peers, while a support group may be made up of strangers with a professional facilitator.

You don’t need to formalize your support network, just meet for a coffee break or lunch, chat on the phone, or go for a walk.

Support networks build your sense of belonging, increase your sense of self-worth and give you a feeling of security knowing you have someone to turn to. They may be able to give you other ideas for reducing stress also. Supportive friends and family may be your best defense against stress.

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