



Nutrition And Stress

Will certain nutrients or foods reduce the stress in my life?

There are no magical foods or nutrients that will **cure** stress, but if you want to give your body it's best chance to react well to stress, try the following suggestions for healthier eating.

Eat 3 Balanced Meals A Day

- Try to eat at about the same time each day.
- Try to avoid long periods of time between each meal.
- Include at least one starch/grain item at each meal, preferably whole grains.
- Milk, meats and meat substitutes are good sources of protein and should be a part of each meal.
- Fruits and vegetables are low in calories and high in fiber and other nutrients. Include at least one to two servings at each meal.
- Mixed meals (containing carbohydrates, protein, fat) will be more satisfying and will stay with you longer.

Pre-Plan Your Meals and Snacks

- Take time to plan your meals and snacks ahead of time and stick with the plan.
- If you are eating a meal in a restaurant plan for the extra calories by eating less at the other meals or exercising more that day.
- Do not skip meals as this may result in calorie deprivation and lead to overeating later in the day.

Choose Snacks from the Food Pyramid

The most satisfying snacks are those that include all energy sources - carbohydrates, protein and fat.

Some healthy snack ideas are:

- cheese and crackers
- yogurt
- a small sandwich
- celery sticks and peanut butter
- cottage cheese with fruit
- cereal with milk.

Avoid Eating On-The-Run

Take time to sit and relax and enjoy what you are eating.

- Plan for a meal to last 15-20 minutes. Eating slowly allows time for you to enjoy what you are eating.
- Always sit at a table when eating - don't stand and eat.
- When you are eating only eat - avoid other activities such as reading the paper or watching TV
- If you have to eat at your desk, clear your work away and "set a place" using a place mat.
- Limit the places you allow yourself to eat at. This will result in less impulse eating.

Avoid or Limit the Use of Products that Contain Caffeine

- Coffee, tea, colas, chocolate and some over-the-counter medications (such as Excedrin and Dristan) contain caffeine.
- Caffeine stimulates the nervous system, which may lead to tension and irritability.
- Caffeine may also interfere with sleep, resulting in fatigue and increased anxiety for some people.

Limit Alcohol Intake To 5-7 Drinks Or Less A Week

- Alcohol may add stress to the body rather than giving a calming effect.
- Alcohol contains empty calories - calories and not nutrients.

Avoid "Stress" Formulas

- Unbalanced vitamin supplements may aggravate a pre-existing nutrient deficiency and further compromise your immune system and ability to cope with stress.
- Better choice is a multivitamin mineral supplement that provides no more than 100% daily value for each vitamin and mineral.

Eat Because Of Physical Hunger

Make a list of what triggers eating other than physical hunger. Common triggers are boredom, fatigue, depression, anxiety, excitement, sight of food, smell of food and activities we associate with eating such as watching TV.

- Find ways to cope other than with food. See example below

Trigger: Boredom

Solution: Take a walk, bike ride, read a book or magazine, or work on a hobby (knitting, model building, crafts).

Balance your food choices throughout the day and let hunger, not emotions, be your guide.

For more information about healthy eating, please talk with your dietitian.

For a list of Aurora facilities with a dietitian, please call

Aurora Health Care toll free at 1-888-863-5502.