MIXING IT UP
TO REDUCE STRESS

HIC MIC **HENRY COUNTY MEDICAL CENTER**

#SILENCE THE SHAME TN

How Stress Impacts Your Physical Health

Sleep problems. Frequent headaches. Inability to focus. Stress may be the cause, and it may be affecting other areas of your health, including your moods and your behavior.

Everyone experiences stress. Over the short term, stress can make you more alert and motivate you to be productive. However, long-term stress can lead to serious health problems, including high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

The good news is that learning to recognize the symptoms of stress can help you manage it.
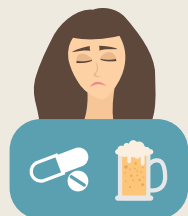
HEALTH EFFECTS OF STRESS INCLUDE:

Physical:
- Chest pain
- Headache
- Trouble sleeping
- Digestion problems
- Muscle tension
- Sex drive changes

Mental:
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Lack of motivation
- Inability to focus
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Anger

Behavioral:
- Drug, alcohol or tobacco use
- Avoiding social interactions
- Lack of motivation to exercise
- Changes in eating patterns

Need More Help?

If you need more help managing stress, talk to a doctor, nurse, or mental health professional who can help you recognize causes of stress and teach you how to cope.

If you experience chest pain, get emergency treatment, especially if:

- It happens during physical activity
- You have shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Pain that radiates into your shoulder or arm

For more information, contact the National Mental Health Association: (800) 969-NMHA (6642) or www. nmha.org

THE TOP 10 STRESS BUSTERS

There's no avoiding stress in today's complicated world. In fact, most of us experience at least 50 fight-or-flight responses every day.

There are lots of things you can do to cope with—and even prevent—your body's stress reactions

Here are the Top 10 ways to fight back against stress every day:

1. Hit the gym. Regular exercise dissipates stress through your muscles—and boosts your mood too.

2. Make an appointment with yourself. Write it down in your datebook or planner, and do something you enjoy--a manicure or pedicure, for example,

3. Breathe deep. Inhale deeply through your nose, then blow out the air through your mouth while counting slowly to 10; repeat at least five times.

4. Get some sun. Even a brief break outside in the sunshine can lift your spirits—but don't forget the sunscreen.

5. Stretch yourself. Stretch up with both arms in the air, one at a time, and then follow with five deep breaths to soothe tensed-up muscles.

6. Be a groupie. Get involved with a group activity where you interact with other people, whether it's a book club meeting or just a regular girls' night out. Relating to other people is a proven way to reduce emotional stress.

7. Give yourself a timeout. Shut the office or bedroom door, turn off the phone and the pager, and give yourself 10 to 15 minutes of "mindfulness" time to meditate. Imagine yourself in a beautiful setting, or just enjoy the peace and quiet.

8. Skip the candy bar break. Sugary, fatty comfort foods may offer a temporary feeling of well-being, but in the long run they don't help you manage stress. Instead, find a healthy treat to indulge in, like fresh berries or low-fat popcorn.

9. Tense and relax. Starting with your head, tense and relax your entire body, moving downward in groups of muscles. Squeeze as tight as you can, hold for three seconds, then release. Do slow, deep breaths afterward.

10. Anticipate and adapt. Try to head off stress before it hits by thinking about what really pushes your buttons. Then, prepare yourself in advance by changing what you can whenever possible, and making peace with what you can't change.

For more information, go online at www.hcmc-tn.org or call our FindLine at 731-644-3463.