

## Treating Anxiety and Stress Naturally

There are many things you can do to reduce your levels of anxiety and stress naturally. The list that follows may be helpful to you in dealing with your own anxiety, nervousness, and irritability. Please consult with your nutritionist, physician or mental health provider to discuss which approaches might be best for you.

### Anxiety Reducing Strategies

- Gradually reduce your **sugar** intake as low as possible. Too much sugar disrupts our metabolism and strips the body of essential nutrients. Watch out for packaged and canned food. They are laden with hidden sugar. And don't just go and replace the sugar with artificial sweeteners. As reported on 60 Minutes, Aspartame is implicated in many health problems, including anxiety reactions, dizziness, convulsions, etc.
- Reduce your intake of **alcohol and tobacco**. Both of these items cause major disruptions in our biochemistry and are leading causes of death in America.
- Eliminate or drastically reduce **processed grains** as much as possible. This includes white bread, pasta, biscuits, cakes, pizza, etc. You can eat whole grains but be careful. Many people are allergic to wheat and other grains.
- Try to eat **protein** at every meal, especially breakfast. Protein is a very stable energy source. This will stabilize your insulin levels and foster proper neuron functioning. Soy products, lean meat and fish are good protein sources.
- Eat lots of **vegetables**. Carbohydrates help us to manufacture serotonin. This chemical is important to the regulation of our moods.
- Gradually cut out **coffee** over a period of a week or so to prevent severe withdrawal.
- Drink a lot of **water**. Water assists the body in eliminating biochemical waste.
- **Exercise** regularly. Exercise releases endorphins, natural morphine like chemicals that make us feel calm and contented. Exercise increases self-esteem, lowers body weight and assists the body to function properly.
- Learn how to practice **meditation** or some form of deep relaxation. Meditation has many positive physiological and psychological benefits. It decreases tension, activates the parasympathetic nervous system (which slows our bodies down and gets us out of the stress mode) and slows biological aging.

- Avoid foods to which you **allergic**. This is a key element in any anti-anxiety program. Eating foods that are bad for you causes intense anxiety or depressive symptoms. Many people are allergic to grains, including wheat and corn, beans, and most dairy products.
- Avoid **MSG!**
- Think of talking with a nutritionist about supplementing your diet with **vitamins and minerals**. Especially take B1, B2, B6, folic acid, vitamin C, and magnesium. These nutrients function to manufacture neurotransmitters. Selenium may even protect the neurotransmitters from damage. Zinc, B6, iodine, folic acid, and B12 are essential to the development and functioning of the nervous system. Free form amino acids can also be taken if necessary. GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid) is especially good for panic attacks and regulating the entire nervous system). Calcium supplements also produce calmness.
- There are many **herbs** that are beneficial in the treatment of anxiety. Valerian Root, Passion Flower, Chamomile, Skullcap and Dandelion are very helpful in fostering relaxation.
- Eat six **small meals** throughout the day. This will help you maintain a balanced energy and coping level.

### **Making Changes**

Don't pressure yourself to make all of the changes listed above all at once. We all change at our own pace. The important thing is that you have made the decision to take responsibility for your health. Educate yourself about health issues . Consult with a nutritionally oriented physician, a nutritionist, or mental health professional to discuss which changes may be most important for you. If you are in psychotherapy or under a doctor's care, you may find your progress increasing as your body regains it's health and balance.

Please keep in mind that these suggestions are not a replacement for seeing the appropriate professional to discuss your needs.

### **For More Assistance**

If you wish to speak to someone about feelings of anxiety and stress or other personal issues, you can make an appointment to see a personal counselor at the Personal Counseling and Career Services Center, 0203 James Hall, 718 951-5363. All services are free and confidential.

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