

Tame Stress to Reduce Neck and Back Pain



Daily demands create stress and, although some stress may be good, too much can cause health problems. Most people equate stress with high blood pressure, heart attack or stroke. But did you know neck and back pain, insomnia, and weight gain can be stress-related too? Feeling helpless to relieve stress makes matters worse.

Stress and Spine Pain

Financial pressures, long work weeks, and medical problems typify common anxieties and everyday stress. Prolonged stress can become chronic, resulting in muscle tension sometimes felt as a stiff, achy neck or back. Sometimes stress causes spine pain.

5 Point Tune-up to Knock Out Stress

These tips can help you manage stress to relieve neck or back pain:

1. Check those vital signs

- Get a medical checkup
- Talk to your health-care provider about stress. Sometimes, side effects from medication (prescription or over-the-counter), herbal products, or other supplements can cause restlessness, insomnia, anxiety, and stressful feelings.
- Physical therapy at Access Physical Therapy & Wellness combines pain-relieving non-invasive treatments with therapeutic exercise, posture correction, and preventive body mechanics.

Most states, including NY, allow you to see your physical therapist without a prescription from your doctor. PTs are experts in dealing with your muscles and joints and are a great first choice for pain.

- Consider talk therapy with a stress counselor, psychologist, or support group.

2. Get Moving!

- Swimming combined with a sauna or steam bathing can help relieve stress-induced pain.
- Take frequent stretch breaks to loosen up tight neck or back muscles.
- Go for a short walk at break or lunch time to rev up your circulation to reduce stress.
- Some yoga positions and relaxation movements help reduce stress and stretch muscles. Viniyoga blends breathing and movement together to quiet body and mind. Unlike other forms of yoga, viniyoga movements are less precise and adapted to the person's unique physical condition. Talk to your health-care provider about yoga or other stretching movements to ease stress and back pain.

3. Learn to Relax

- Kick back for 5 minutes and put your feet up.
- Cold and hot compresses can help ease stress-related neck and back pain. Wrap an ice pack and hot pack individually in towels. Apply the ice pack for 10 minutes and then the hot pack for 5 minutes. Alternate several times.
- Massage and aromatherapy are stress-relieving spa treatments you can do at home. Ask a friend or partner to massage sore neck and back muscles gently. Aromatic massage oils containing eucalyptus may help ease muscle pain.
- Try meditation or visualization to ease stress. Some meditation practices focus on breathing and calm a busy mind. Visualization techniques to reduce stress sometimes combine imagery with breathing exercises.

4. Control the Little Things in Life

- Break up problems into smaller manageable units and work on resolving the easier aspects first.

- Learn your limits and say “no” to burdensome commitments.

5. Eat and Drink for Life

- Make meal times less stressful. Choose nourishing foods, eat slowly, and savor each bite. Be aware of how much you eat and drink, and graze on healthy foods.
- Caffeinated coffee, cola, and other drinks do little to reduce stress or promote restful sleep. Avoid red wine at night, as it can make falling and staying asleep difficult. A good night’s sleep or afternoon catnap can help relieve stress.

Remember

You may not be able to control life’s stressors or what you are presented with, but you do have control over your reactions to them.