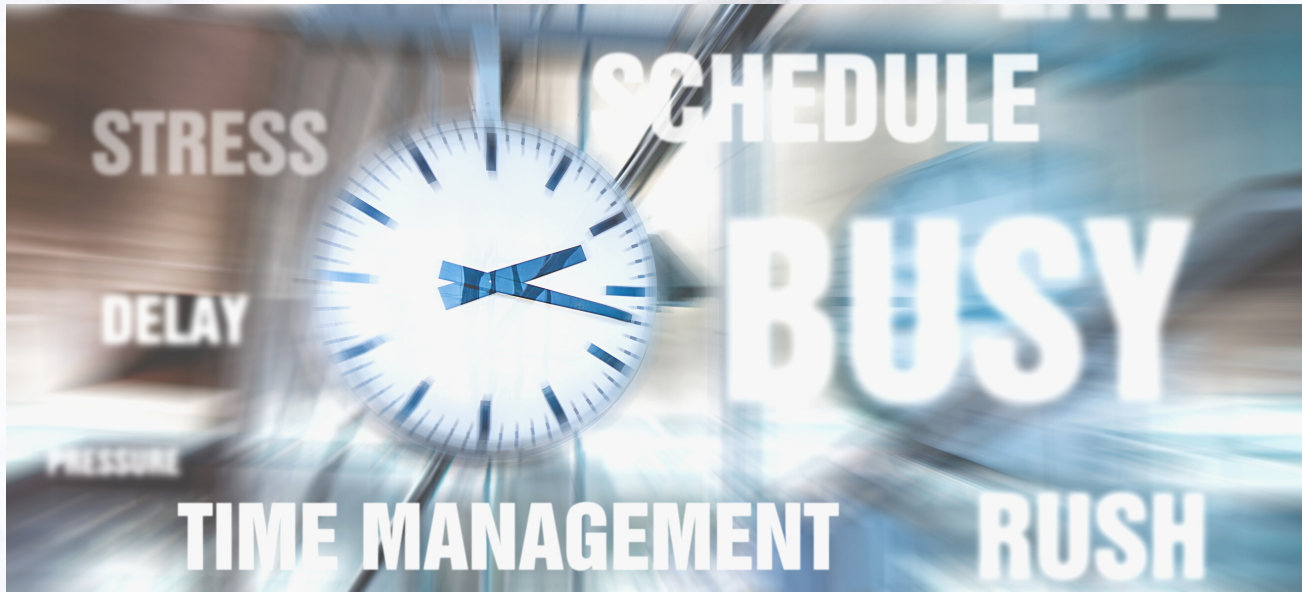


THE VELMA B. COX FOUNDATION

For Type II Diabetes & High Blood Pressure



STRESS...Why you should care.

~Written by Dr. Samantha Williams ND, RD~

With hectic and busy lives, dealing with stress has become a part of daily living. After a tumultuous year in 2020 due to COVID 19, many people are more stressed than ever before. Stress is how the brain and body respond to the demands and challenges of life. Challenges such as our jobs, school, a significant life change or a traumatic event can be stressful. Historically, our bodies are wired to react to stress as a way to protect us from external threats and predators, like animals. Such threats, in today's day and age, are rare. However, our bodies see the stress we endure from working long hours or struggling to pay bills, as threats.

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~Stress & Health~

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When we encounter a perceived threat, like a large dog barking, a section of our brain sets off an alarm system in our body. This is known as the “fight or flight response”. Our adrenal glands are prompted to release adrenaline and cortisol. Adrenaline is a hormone that gives us energy during an emergency. It causes our heart rate to increase and elevates our blood pressure. If faced with a threat where we need to run, we are able to do so. Cortisol, on the other hand, causes increased levels of glucose in the bloodstream so that the body has a ready source of energy to use. Other body functions like digestion that are not essential in a flight or fight situation are turned off.

"The body's stress-response system is supposed to be short-lived..."

The body's stress-response system is supposed to be short-lived. Once the perceived threat has passed, hormone levels are supposed to return to normal. Our adrenaline and cortisol levels drop and our heart rate and blood pressure return to normal levels. However, when we are faced with chronic stress, our fight-or-flight reaction stays turned on and adrenaline and cortisol levels remain high.



~Stress & Health~

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The long-term activation of the stress-response system and chronically elevated stress hormones like cortisol negatively impact our health. We become at increased risk for:

- Anxiety/ Depression
- Digestive problems
- Headaches
- Sleep problems
- Heart Disease
- Weight gain/ Obesity
- High Blood Pressure
- Diabetes



It's so important to learn healthy strategies to cope with stress such as:

- Eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise
- Getting adequate sleep (at least 7-8hrs)
- Practicing relaxation techniques such as stretching, deep breathing, getting a massage
- Take time for things you enjoy such as reading a book or listening to music
- Have a healthy support system around you - family, friends, colleagues & community members
- Have a sense of humor - laugh & smile
- Seeking professional counseling when needed.

Stress is a fact of life. We may not be able to eliminate it but we can learn to develop solutions and take steps to manage it, in order to create healthier and happier lives.

References:

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3428710/>
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20046037?p=1>

Disclaimer:

The information presented is for general information purposes only. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. It is highly recommended that before you start any new regimen, please consult with your healthcare provider.