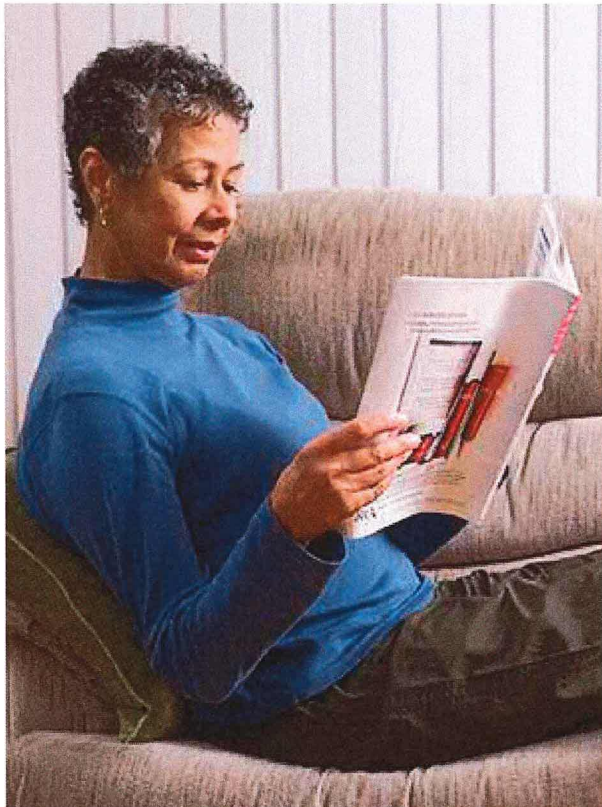




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Control Stress for Cardiovascular Health



Lower your risk for heart disease by controlling stress. Some people cope with stress by eating unhealthy foods, overeating, smoking, or drinking, all of which can increase risk. Stress can also cause a temporary increase in blood pressure and heart rate. The next time you feel tension taking over, sit back and reassess what is bothering you. Is it worth being stressed about it? Does it really matter? If you're faced with a big, stressful problem, talk it out with family or friends. Stay close to the supportive people in your life and they will help you work through and manage the stressful events that you come across.

Learn to relax

To reduce stress, you need to practice daily relaxation. Here are a few ideas:

- Make special time for yourself each day to read a book, listen to music, watch the sun set, or do anything that makes you feel calm and peaceful.
- Use your favorite kind of exercise as a perfect way to release tension.
- Practice time management by giving yourself enough time to get things done.
- Keep your sense of humor! If you can laugh at yourself and the crazy things that happen each day, you'll stay happier and healthier.
- Try deep breathing or meditation. Also, many libraries and bookstores have audio files or CDs that may help you relax.

- Imagine stress away. When you're feeling stress, stop what you're doing. Imagine a peaceful scene—a warm beach or rolling green hills, for example.
- Identify what triggers stress for you and plan ahead to avoid or prepare for those triggers.
- Limit situations with relatives or friends that have the potential to turn into arguments and stressful encounters.
- Realize that specific minor issues are not so important, no matter how complicated, that you need to create a stressful situation for yourself.
- If you have stress-relieving places or activities that you know work for you, remind yourself to use these resources when you feel your stress levels rising.
- If you need more help with coping, try joining a support group. Sharing problems with others can help you handle the big stresses in your life.

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