

## **Stress**

Stress occurs in both children and adults.

Stress is defined as your body's response to any demand placed on it. Everyone experiences stress.

People think of it as being the same as tension or pressure but not all stress is negative. There are positive stresses in our lives. Celebrations, running a marathon, having a baby or buying a new house can all be stress producing. Our bodies do not distinguish between negative or positive stress. Research does indicate we recover from positive stress more quickly. There are many physiological changes that occur in our bodies with stress. The brain tells our body to react. This is called the "flight or fight" mechanism. The brain sends a message to the adrenal glands on our kidneys to release the hormone adrenalin. Adrenalin causes the following:

- Increased heart rate.
- Blood vessel constriction
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased production of stomach acids
- Blood sugar elevation
- Possible increased release of cholesterol
- Increased muscle tension
- Release of blood coagulants

Stress prolonged over time can cause illness.

How do you know if you have too much stress?

Your body might give you the following signals:

- Emotional: blahs or lack of energy, feeling out of control, having low self-esteem or anger (a person may withdraw from others)
- Behavioral: relationships changes, doing things to the extreme or showing addictive behaviors
- Physical: experiencing frequent illnesses, insomnia, headaches, weight changes, stomach problems, chronic fatigue or irritability

What to do to help relieve stress

- Deep breathe
- Exercise
- Stretching
- Sleep
- Communication
- Humor
- Identify priorities
- Hobbies
- Time management

Life will never be stress free. We all handle stress in our own way. Try to incorporate the seven bulleted points to help manage stress.