



April Is National Stress Awareness Month

The National Institutes of Health has designated the month of April as National Stress Awareness Month. We all experience stress; it is unavoidable. While some stress can be beneficial, too much, or prolonged stress can be harmful.

Today many people seem to be in constant stress. When the body senses a threat or stressor, and it goes on high alert. Once that threat passes, the body quickly recovers, or at least that is the way it should happen. Stressors take many forms and come from many places. It can be family or health concerns, work problems or financial issues. It can just be the ordinary everyday hassles. However, when the stress is unrelenting or there are too many stressors, the body may remain in a constant state of high alert. This can lead to poor concentration, bad moods, professional burnout, and mental and physical health problems. When stress becomes chronic, the body cannot return to normal functioning. Chronic stress has been linked to health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and anxiety. It's critical to recognize what stress and anxiety look like, and to take steps to build resilience. Managing stress is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. The NHI recommends the following steps to reduce stress and build resilience.

1. **Recognize and counter signs of stress.** Your body sends signals that it's stressed, including difficulty concentrating, headaches, cold hands, tight muscles, a nervous stomach, clenched teeth, feeling on edge, fidgety, irritable, or withdrawn. Knowing how your body communicates can help you deal with stressful moments. Learn to not only recognize but also to name these feelings, either to oneself or to a friend. Then, take action to counter their effects. For example, deep breathing, stretching, going for a walk, writing down your thoughts and taking quiet time to focus can help induce relaxation and reduce tension.
2. **Take time for yourself.** Make taking care of yourself a daily routine. It's not selfish or self-indulgent — and it might require saying “no” to requests or prioritizing yourself along with your responsibilities. Start with small changes in your routine to help build resilience to stressful circumstances. Work in time to exercise, eat healthy foods, participate in relaxing activities and sleep. In fact, including a regimen of exercise, which for some may include yoga or meditation, can be very important when feeling stressed. Also, take time to notice the “good minutes” in each day or to do something that you enjoy, such as reading a book or listening to music, which can be a way to shift your attention and focus on the positive rather than the negative.
3. **Try new routines.** From scheduling bath and bedtimes to blocking off time to plan and prioritize tasks, additional structure can provide a daily framework that allows you to attune to your body's signals. Then, you can take steps to potentially manage stress earlier than you once did.
4. **Stay connected and make new friends.** Stay in touch with family, friends, and groups in your life — technology makes this easier than ever. Having or being a person to talk

with can be reassuring and calming. Using video features can enhance the connection in telecommunication or online communications for some people.

5. **See problems through a different lens.** Experts call changing the way we think about and respond to stress “reframing.” View sitting in traffic or around the house as an opportunity to enjoy music, podcasts, or pleasant views. Reduce anger in response to rude or aggressive behavior by imagining what might be happening in that person’s life. Keeping situations in perspective is an important way to boost stress resilience. Other steps include positive thinking and creating plans before you begin to resolve problems. You can practice reframing and get better at it over time.
6. **Seek help with problems.** Many people experience the same day-to-day strains related to caregiving, relationships, health, work, and money. Look to friends and family, as appropriate, or other trusted individuals or resources for tips and information.
7. **Talk to a health professional if stress is affecting your well-being, you feel you cannot manage the stress you’re experiencing, or stress has caused you to engage in or increase substance use.**

Recognizing individual signals of a body’s stress responses and learning to respond to those signals in new ways can help build the emotional, intellectual, and physical strength that comprise resilience, which can help you tackle future stressors (NIH).

Adapted from the National Institutes of Health online.

Eyeglasses

Purchasing eyeglasses and contact lenses from online companies has been a growing trend and an inexpensive way to purchasing quality eyewear. These companies offer great selections, less expensive pricing, and quick delivery. To purchase eyeglasses online you need a current prescription with the pupillary distance recorded on it. (It is recommended that you see your eye doctor yearly and have the pupillary measurement done by the doctor.) You will need to know the type of lens you want – single vision, multifocal or progressives as well as any lens coating. Once you receive your new glasses, try them on immediately to be sure they are correct. Most companies have a two week to 30-day return policy if they aren’t correct. *Forbes Vetted* recently reviewed and compiled a list of the best online Eyeglass companies. See below for their picks.

Best Variety of Prescription Glasses Online – ***GlassesUSA, Frames Direct***
Best Affordable Prescription Glasses Online – ***Eyebuydirect, Zenni Optical***
Try Before You Buy Prescription Glasses Online – ***Warby Parker, Liingo Eyewear***
Best Specialty Prescription Glasses Online – ***Pair Eyewear, DIFF Eyewear, JINS Eyewear***

Returning From a Leave

Active members who are returning to work from a leave of absence are reminded that they must notify the KTF Trust Fund in order to reinstate their Health and Dental insurance. Please email enrollment@ktftrustfund.com with your date of return.