



MENTAL HEALTH

STRESS MAY BE FATTENING AND OTHER SIDE EFFECTS

A certain amount of stress is perfectly normal. In fact, Cleveland Clinic states that “the human body is designed to experience stress and react to it”.

It’s when stress levels are consistently high that it begins to affect your health.

The Mental Health Foundation warns that “if our stress response is activated repeatedly, or it persists over time, the effects can result in wear and tear on the body and can cause us to feel permanently in a state of ‘fight or flight’. Rather than helping us push through, this pressure can make us feel overwhelmed or unable to cope.” Chronic stress can result in further serious health problems too. This is why we focus on the impact of chronic stress globally during April every year.

Worry and weight gain

Stress promotes obesity, according to a study published in Biological Psychiatry. The researchers discovered that constant stress resulted in “obesity-related metabolic responses”, causing weight gain and that chronic stressors could potentially add “almost 11 pounds [five kgs] per year”. According to weight loss and lifestyle physician, Dr Charlie Seltzer, not only can stress cause weight gain but it can cause weight gain “in the most dangerous area of the body”.

Stress effects that also need stressing

Dr Seltzer, Mayo Clinic lists overeating and obesity as side effects of stress too, adding high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes as additional associated risks.

Stress-busting suggestions

The best ways to manage your stress, according to WebMD is with exercise, diet, sleep and relaxation techniques. Try some of the following tips:

1. Physical activity is a great way to start because it helps with your mood and can help you sleep better; the medically approved website says.
2. Healthier eating habits can help you too. “The benefits of eating healthy foods extend beyond your waistline to your mental health”, states WebMD adding, “a healthy diet can lessen the effects of stress, build up your immune system, level your mood, and lower your blood pressure.
3. Practise sleep hygiene. “Lack of sleep can also add to your stress level and cause a cycle of stress and sleeplessness”, the website warns.
4. Try to relax with slow movements like stretching, yoga or some kind of meditation or mindfulness practise and it will lower your anxiety and help you to remain calm.

The best thing you can do about stress is to not stress about it. Rather apply some of this expert advice and get it down to what it should be.