

DEALING WITH STRESS

Humans experience stress as part of an ancient biological response that has existed since prehistoric times. This response involves both physical and psychological triggers designed to help a person survive or adapt to their environment.

Why Humans Become Stressed

At a biological level, stress is driven by the sympathetic chain ganglia, located from the neck to the navel. When a stressor is perceived, the body releases chemicals such as acetylcholine, epinephrine (adrenaline), and norepinephrine.

- **Physical Response:** Epinephrine increases blood flow to the heart and muscles while decreasing it in other areas, creating a physical urge to move or act.
- **Social & Emotional Factors:** Stress also arises when your internal state does not match external demands, such as feeling exhausted when you need to be productive. Furthermore, a lack of social connection can increase Tachykinin molecules, which can lead to feelings of fear and paranoia and impair the immune system.
- **Levels of Stress:** Not all stress is harmful; short-term or acute stress can sharpen focus, improve brain performance, and boost the immune system by releasing adrenaline to fight infection. However, long-term stress is detrimental and requires active management.

How to Control Stress

Several tools to manage and decrease stress levels:

1. Immediate Physiological Tools

- **The Physiological Sigh:** This is a highly effective tool for activating the "calming" parasympathetic nervous system. It involves a double inhale to reinflate the lungs' alveoli, followed by a long exhale to rid the body of CO₂.

- **Breath Control:** To reduce stress quickly, you should make your exhales longer than your inhales, as this signals the brain to slow the heart rate. Conversely, inhaling longer and more vigorously increases alertness and heart rate.

2. Lifestyle and Behavioral Adjustments

- **Social Connection:** Engaging with others increases serotonin, which helps counteract the inflammatory and fear-inducing effects of Tachykinin.
- **Foundational Health:** Prioritizing sleep and exercise is essential for managing long-term stress.
- **Deliberate Exposure:** You can intentionally raise your stress levels—through methods such as cold therapy or deliberate hyperventilation—to "train" your body to become comfortable with a high heart rate.

3. Useful Compounds: Certain supplements can help lower the body's stress markers:

- **Ashwagandha:** Known to reduce anxiety and cortisol levels.
- **L-Theanine:** Helps increase GABA and improve sleep quality.
- **Note:** While melatonin is sometimes used, the sources warn that it may cause adrenal insufficiency syndrome.