

<http://hunterdon.webhealthyrecipes.com/Good-Health/Hunterdon/Empowering/Nutrition-and-Fitness/Lose-Stress-Lose-Weight.html>

Lose Stress, Lose Weight

Is stress causing you to gain weight? Many people crave unhealthy foods when they are stressed out. Our diet tips can help.

Stressed out? Gaining weight? Studies show that chronic stress keeps levels of the hormone cortisol elevated, causing us to crave unhealthy fats and processed carbohydrates.

Worse, these excess calories are more likely to be stored in our bellies. Along with unwanted weight gain, abdominal fat is more often linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.

The good news is that a nutritious diet can help boost the immune system, lower blood pressure and body weight, and reduce levels of cortisol.

“Keep in mind,” says Beverley Manganelli, RD, CDE, Manager of Community Nutrition at Hunterdon Medical Center, “that no one food works as a miracle for fighting stress. Your best bet is to focus on whole plant foods and reducing sources of trans and saturated fats.”

Certain foods and diet strategies can increase immunity, decrease cravings and help reduce cortisol levels, says Ms. Manganelli.

Eat regularly. Eat within one hour of waking up, followed by a healthy meal or snack with protein every three to four hours. Lean meats, chicken and fish, eggs, nuts, low-fat dairy, tofu and beans are all good protein choices. Limit sugar and caffeine. They may pick you up in the short term, but ultimately leave you feeling more tired.

Go nutty. Nuts and seeds are packed with B vitamins, zinc, vitamin E and potassium—all good for combating stress and lowering blood pressure.

Get in your greens. Broccoli, kale, spinach and other dark green veggies contain high amounts of magnesium, a stress-busting mineral.

Favor healthy fats. Fish like salmon and sardines are rich in omega-3 fats. Avocados are full of potassium, a blood pressure–lowering mineral.

