

Give yourself a break



We all face stress on a daily basis, but how we deal with it can affect our health. Frequent stress can cause health problems, and over time, weaken your immune system and lead to higher risks of heart disease, certain cancers, hypertension, obesity, and diabetes.

Stress busters are easier than you think. No need to get into a yoga pose or hike a mile, you can get the same benefits by practicing simple healthy habits.

- **Chill out with tunes** – Listening to relaxing music or a favorite tune can steady the heartbeat and boost your mood.
- **Picture this** – Engaging positive visualization can relax tense muscles and put a smile on your face. Think of your favorite object, pet, or vacation spot. Creating this image will take your mind off of stress and replace it with peaceful relaxation.
- **Go with the flow** – If you can't change the cause of the stress, try changing your expectations and the way you react to it.
- **Get moving** – When the going gets tough, the tough gets going with stride. Take a walk during a coffee break or lunch. Skip the elevators and use the stairs. The goal is to build strength and energy when you need it most. Besides, you'll feel and think better.
- **Timeout** – Who says timeouts are just for kids? When you're under pressure or close to the breaking point, it's time to step away and put the stressful situation on hold. Find a quiet place to sit and relax. The stress can wait.
- **Take five minutes to stretch** – The simple action of stretching can improve your circulation and flexibility and help ease the tight muscles that come with stress. Remember to do a five-minute stretch during breaks.

Get the scoop on stress

For helpful information and tips on how to fight stress, go to **blueshieldca.com**, select the *Health & Wellness* section, and look for "stress" under Topics A-Z in the Health Library.