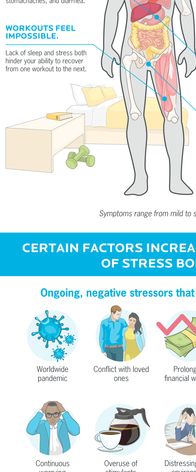
STRESS BOD

PUFFY. LETHARGIC. DULL AS A ROCK. HERE ARE THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF "STRESS BOD"—AND HOW TO ADDRESS IT.

STRESS BOD AFFECTS HOW YOU THINK, FEEL, AND BEHAVE.



EVERYTHING HURTS.

You can thank tight muscles and sensitive nerves for that.

GI ISSUES SEEM MORE COMMON.

Sensitive nerves and changes in digestion can intensify heartburn, stomachaches, and diarrhea.

WORKOUTS FEEL IMPOSSIBLE.

Lack of sleep and stress both hinder your ability to recover from one workout to the next.

YOU'RE FOGGED OVER.

Poor sleep leaves you forgetful, impulsive, touchy, and full of self-doubt. Plus, you can't concentrate.

YOU KEEP GETTING SICK.

White blood cell levels drop and inflammation goes up, so it's harder to fight infections and heal wounds. Blood vessels constrict and resting heart rate rises, increasing risk for diabetes, heart disease, and more.

YOU STRUGGLE WITH YOUR WEIGHT.

Levels of the hunger hormone ghrelin rise while levels of the satiety hormone leptin drop, boosting cravings. Meanwhile, metabolism slows.

YOU'RE NOT IN THE MOOD.

Drops in sex hormone production can slam the brakes on sex drive.

Symptoms range from mild to severe.

CERTAIN FACTORS INCREASE YOUR RISK OF STRESS BOD.

Ongoing, negative stressors that wear you down

Worldwide pandemic

Conflict with loved ones

Prolonged financial worries

Endless to-do list



Continuous worrying

Overuse of stimulants

Distressing work environment

Racial discrimination

Being more stress-sensitive

STRESS-RESISTANT

- ✓ Strong support networks
- ✓ A sense of control
- ✓ An optimistic, go-with-the-flow attitude
- ✓ Time in soothing environments
- ✓ Coping skills (ex. deep breathing)

STRESS-SENSITIVE

- ✗ Isolation
- ✗ Traumatic early life experiences
- ✗ A pessimistic, reactionary attitude
- ✗ Too much time in go-go-go settings (ex. work)
- ✗ Few, if any, coping skills

Not enough rest and recovery

Sleep and relaxation allow the body to adapt, repair, and grow stronger.

But when you don't give yourself enough downtime, you grow weaker, and athletic performance suffers.



6 STEPS TO ADDRESSING STRESS BOD

STEP 1 RULE OUT OTHER PROBLEMS.

Your healthcare provider can test you for anemia and other conditions that look and feel like Stress Bod.



STEP 2 LOOK FOR HIDDEN STRESSORS.



Some stressors don't feel stressful. Which ones do you have?

- Frequent use of social media
- Obsessive news consumption
- High air pollution
- Excessive noise
- Frequent travel
- Intense exercise
- Food intolerances
- High caffeine intake
- High alcohol intake
- "Always on" texts & email
- Long commute in traffic
- Unhappy relationships
- Lack of confidence
- Comparing yourself to others

STEP 3 LOG YOUR STRESS.

For one week, keep track of your stressors and symptoms.



EACH MORNING:

- Waking time
- How you feel
- How you slept
- Heart rate
- Temperature

THROUGHOUT THE DAY:

- What you eat and drink
- How you feel
- Exposure to any hidden stressors

EACH EVENING:

- Time you go to sleep
- How you feel

STEP 4 REMOVE STRESSORS.



Talk to a therapist.

Limit exposure to news to 1-2x a day.

Timebox "worrying" (ex. 1-2 pm).

Work at home one day a week.



Ask for help (ex. speak w/ supervisor).

Timebox social media (ex. between 6 and 7 pm).

Outsource your least favorite chores (ex. cleaning).

Establish boundaries (ex. no work messages after 7 pm).



Automate less important decisions (ex. eat the same thing for breakfast every day).

Consider breaking up with toxic, chronic stressors (ex. toxic relationships).

STEP 5 ADD STRESS RELIEVERS.

Try to find five stress relievers that work well for you, so you always have one when you need it. Here are some ideas.

Meditation	**Reading**	**Writing about your problems**	**Intentionally noticing beauty**
Yoga	**Music**	**Connecting with friends**	**Writing thank-you notes**
Tai chi	**Drinking tea**	**Painting/drawing/coloring**	**Searching for silver linings**
Deep breathing	**Daydreaming**	**Recreational sports/activities**	**Intentionally spreading happiness**
Stretching	**Warm baths**	**Walks**	
Meaningful relationships/discussions	**Candles**	**Time in nature**	
Sauna	**Aromatherapy**	**Counting your blessings**	



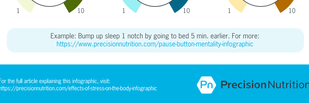
To add effective stress relievers to your toolbox, try thinking of it as a series of experiments.



STEP 6 EMBRACE INCREMENTAL CHANGE FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS.

Quality nutrition, sleep, and self-care strategies can protect you from Stress Bod, but an all-or-nothing approach is counterproductive.

HEALTH PRACTICES ARE LIKE DIALS. WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE WHEN YOU BUMP THEM UP BY JUST A NOTCH OR TWO?



Example: Bump up sleep 1 notch by going to bed 5 min. earlier. For more: https://www.precisionnutrition.com/pause-button-mentality-infographic