



Better Health Matters

FOSTERING INDIVIDUAL WELLNESS, MEMBER BY MEMBER

**Farm Bureau
HEALTH PLANS**

Tennessee

what is **STRESS**?

Stress is your body's response to a challenge or demand, and not all of those responses are negative. Common stressors may include preparing for vacation, getting a speeding ticket, taking out a loan, troubles at work, getting married, having a baby and lots of other everyday life events.

When you experience stress, your body releases the hormones adrenaline and cortisol, which increase alertness and put you in a "fight or flight" mode. When this happens, you may experience an increase in blood pressure, heart rate and blood sugar.



Here are some healthy ways to manage stress:



Deep breathing. Studies show that slow, deep breathing can help lower blood pressure and reduce cortisol levels.

Exercise. Regular physical activity can significantly reduce stress. The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity per week or a combination of the two. Aerobic activity is anything that increases your heart rate, such as walking, cycling or swimming.

Get outside. Multiple studies have linked spending time in nature to improved mood.

Healthy eating. For many people, chronic stress can increase a desire for unhealthy foods that are high in sugar and saturated

fat. Prevent unhealthy weight gain and disease by eating a regular healthy diet of fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains and non or low-fat dairy. Limit alcohol intake and avoid using drugs to deal with stress.

Mindfulness and meditation. Like deep breathing, mindfulness and meditation have been linked to lower blood pressure and reduced cortisol levels. They may also reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression and help you sleep. If you don't know where to start, try downloading a meditation app on your smartphone.

Sleep. Getting enough sleep can help improve your thought process and mood. Aim for eight to nine hours every night.