

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama provides the Stress Management Tool Kit to help your employees learn to recognize and cope with stress.

In addition to printed materials, the Stress Management Tool Kit includes links to online learning videos: The first reveals how stress affects the body and how to recognize potential stressors. The second addresses techniques for coping with stress.

Stress Management Tool Kit: EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Coping with Stress

When experienced over a long period of time, stress can damage your health. Chronic stress has been linked to many health conditions, including high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. It can also impact your sleeping habits, mood and overall quality of life. While the events and situations that trigger stress may be unavoidable, you do not have to let stress control you. By learning ways to manage stress-reducing techniques, you can not only improve your health, but your life.

Use these tips to help manage stress:

- Exercise, take a brisk walk or try yoga.
- Use progressive relaxation.
- Keep a journal or diary.
- Take deep breaths from the diaphragm, which is sometimes called "belly breathing."
- Make a list of chores and errands - putting them on paper can often remind you what you need to do about the number of tasks on your to-do list.
- Practice healthy eating habits.
- Try meditation, visualization or retreating to a quiet area.
- Get a massage.
- Use positive self-talk.
- Take time for your outdoor activities - it is important to have someone to talk to.
- Slow down and simplify your life.
- Try counseling sessions, especially those that focus on changing your way of thinking.

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Coping with Stress: FYH-238

Measure Your Stress

The following scale, developed by Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, is a clinical procedure designed as a tool to recognize the relationship between social readjustment, stress and susceptibility to illness.

Answer the questions listed below and place a checkmark by any that have happened to you within the last 12 months.

Death of a spouse	100	Increase in apartment significant other	35
Divorce	73	Marriage or soon to be remarried	51
Marital separation	65	Retirement or mortgage of loan	30
Death of a close family member	63	Change in responsibility at work	29
Divorce	62	Get on disability leaving home	28
Service personal injury or illness	53	Travel with in-laws or children	28
Marriage	50	Outstanding personal achievement	28
Change in health of family member	47	Spouse begins/retires work outside home	26
Death of a close friend	45	Retirement of personal habits	26
Marital reconciliation	45	Travel with in-laws	25
Change in health of family member	40	Change in work hours or conditions	20
Relinquishing	39	Change in residence	20
Death of a new family member	38	Location	20
Change in financial status	37	Christmas	12
Death of a close friend	36	Minor violation of the law	11

Interpretation

Those who score a 200-250 during a one-year period have a 50 percent chance of developing an illness or experiencing a change in their health. Those a score of 300 or more, chances increase to 85 percent.

TOTAL POINTS FROM QUESTIONS

0 - 50: no significant problem
 50 - 100: mild stress
 100 - 150: moderate stress
 150 - 200: moderate stress
 200 - 250: moderate stress
 250 - 300: severe stress
 300 and up: severe stress

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Measure Your Stress: FYH-239

Stress & Your Body

Did you know that almost every system in your body can be damaged by stress? Here are some examples:

Immune System
Chronic stress causes the body to release cortisol, a hormone which suppresses the immune system. This can lead to increased susceptibility to viral and bacterial infections, cancer and autoimmune diseases.

Diabetes
In people with diabetes, stress can cause high blood sugar.

Appetite Changes
Stress can cause erratic eating behaviors - either overeating or loss of appetite.

Hypertension
Stress has been shown to lead to high blood pressure and an increase in cardiovascular disease.

Headaches
Headaches are common for persons with acute or chronic stress.

Sleep
Stress affects your sleep, primarily causing insomnia.

Ulcera
Ulcers have also been linked to chronic stress.

Anxiety & Depression
High levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, can cause anxiety and depression.

Cholesterol
Elevated cholesterol has been linked to stress.

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Stress & Your Body: FYH-240

Stress and YOUR BODY

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Poster FYH-251

Poster FYH-250

Here are a few suggestions to help you use these materials in your workplace.

Every workplace is different, so find out what works best for you.

- Distribute the materials and present the online videos in one comprehensive educational workshop.
- Separate the topics into a two-part series and use in a group setting. Have someone facilitate a session to discuss each video. Display the posters and distribute the appropriate materials coordinating with each video.
- Another very simple option is to play the videos in your breakroom, display the posters and make the handouts available to your employees.

Ordering additional materials is easy!

- 1. Go to AlabamaBlue.com/employers.**
- 2. Select "Forms and Materials."**
- 3. Enter the stock number to download or order.**

Title	Stock No.
<i>Coping with Stress</i> - handout.....	FYH-238
<i>Measure Your Stress</i> - handout.....	FYH-239
<i>Stress and Your Body</i> - handout	FYH-240
<i>Stress and Your Body</i> - 11x17 poster.....	FYH-241
<i>Stress and Your Body</i> - 11x17 poster.....	FYH-250
<i>Stress and Your Body</i> - 11x17 poster.....	FYH-251
<i>Video 1 "Understanding Stress"</i>	Link
<i>Video 2 "Stress Management"</i>	Link