



BACKGROUND: Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension and can come from an event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. In short bursts, stress can be positive, but when stress lasts for a long time, it can harm your health. Acute stress is short-term stress that goes away quickly. It helps manage dangerous situations and occurs when you do something new or exciting. Chronic stress is stress that lasts for a longer period. Chronic stress can arise if you have money problems, an unhappy marriage, or trouble at work. Chronic stress is typically any type of stress that goes on for weeks or months. Chronic stress keeps the body alert, even though there is no danger. Over time, this puts you at risk for health problems, including high blood pressure; heart disease; diabetes; obesity; depression or anxiety; and skin problems, such as acne or eczema.

(Source: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003211.htm>)

STRESS AND AGING: Stress can speed up aging. A study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that stress can add years to the age of a person's immune system cells. The study focused on telomeres, or caps on the end of chromosomes. Whenever a cell divides, the telomeres in that cell get a little shorter. When the telomere becomes too short, time runs out and the cell can no longer divide or replenish itself. This is a key process of aging. Researchers checked both the telomeres and the stress levels of 58 healthy premenopausal women. Results showed on average, the immune system cells of highly stressed women had aged by an extra 10 years. The study didn't explain how stress adds years to cells making up the immune system but revealed that the exact mechanisms that connect the mind to the cells are unknown. Researchers are sticking with the theory that stress hormones could be somehow shortening telomeres and cutting the life span of cells. Stress management is still considered the key to living a longer, healthier life. Things like maintaining a positive outlook, staying close to family and friends, and exercising are all recommended for healthy aging.

(Source: <https://consumer.healthday.com/encyclopedia/aging-1/age-health-news-7/aging-and-stress-645997.html>)

NEW STUDY SUGGESTS SOME STRESS IS GOOD: A team of researchers from Penn State studied whether people who experience little to no stress are healthier than people who do become stressed. In the study, the researchers tracked 2,804 participants for over a week interviewing them nightly for eight consecutive nights, asking questions about their chronic conditions, physical symptoms, mood, and number of stressors they experienced during the day. They also asked how many positive experiences they had. About 10% of the participants did not report experiencing stress during the study period. These individuals were more likely to experience positive moods and less likely to have chronic health conditions. However, the participants who did not experience stress scored lower on the cognition test than those who did. The difference in scores equated to the cognitive decline that would occur in approximately 8 years of aging. Participants who did not report any stress also experienced fewer positive events than those who did and were less likely to give or receive emotional support. "Experiencing these stressors may not be pleasant, but they may force you to solve a problem, and this might actually be good for cognitive functioning, especially as we grow older," said senior author David M. Almeida, a professor of human development and family studies at Penn State.

(Source: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/stress-may-have-some-important-cognitive-benefits-new-study-suggests#Stress-and-health>)

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