

Three Ways to Handle Stress through Nutrition

Think of good nutrition as good medicine when you are dealing with stress.

We all experience some form of stress every day; and how we handle it depends on our state of health. I like to think of my health as my bank account; health reserves that I can draw upon in times of stress.

There are 3 main methods to deal with stress. They are nutrition, exercise and rest. For this article, I'll focus on diet and nutrition.

What you eat gives you energy and the more energy you have the better you will be able to deal with everyday stress. Our brains have to be fed to work properly. And when the brain doesn't get proper nutrients it becomes unbalanced or stressed which we perceive as being anxious or depressed or unfocused.

There are 3 elements of nutrition the brain and body needs to function well.

1. The first element of good nutrition is **protein**. Our bodies are made of protein. Our muscles and bones are made from protein. All the metabolic mechanisms use protein to function. If we don't eat enough protein then our bodies start to break down our muscles and bones to get this important nutrient. So we need protein as it helps us deal with stress.
 - There is a big difference between good and bad protein. How can you tell the difference? A good protein has been sustainably raised like a cow, pig, chicken, or sheep that has been raised on a small ranch or farm or caught in the wild as in the case of fish. Sustainably raised animals tend to be healthier and not stressed which makes for a better protein. Good protein is easier for the body to process so you have more energy.
 - Bad protein comes from an animal that has been factory raised in crowded conditions, fed foods to fatten it up fast, and given antibiotics to keep it from getting sick. Bad protein is harder for the body to break down. You use more energy to digest it and it can leave a toxic residue that your body has to work hard to eliminate.
2. The 2nd element is **sugar or carbohydrates**. Now this topic has been in the news for years and it is confusing because you hear about simple carbs and complex carbs and high glycemic this and carb loading that. Well here's a simple tip to help you choose good carbs: If you can look at a food

and know here it came from it is a good carb. For example when you choose an apple or a carrot you know it is a plant that was recently harvested. Now if you look at a packet of sugar you cannot tell if it came from a sugar beet or a sugar cane. This is not a good carb because it's been processed.

3. The 3rd key element of nutrition is **fats**. You cannot live without fat in your diet. Like carbs a good fat is something you can look at and know where it derived from. For example olive oil is easy to understand its origin. Even bacon can be considered a good fat in moderation if the pig is sustainably raised.

A bad fat is usually a substance like partially hydrogenated oil which has been used in food because it increases product shelf life and decreases the need for refrigeration. I have no idea where it came from outside a lab. The bad fats in a factory raised animal aren't healthy because the animals are filled with fattening feed, antibiotics and hormones which can be toxic to our system, and make it harder for our body digest this type of food. This leads to your body using more energy than necessary which makes you feel more tired and less able to cope with stress.

We need all 3 of these key elements for a healthy body. Think of them like building a fire:

- Carbs are the kindling to get the fire going
- Proteins are the bigger logs that burn a long time
- Fats cause the fire to burn hotter which burns more calories.

Last, I want to give you some recommendations for dealing with stress through nutrition and dietary supplements.

1. First, **eat healthier foods**. Buy locally grown or organic vegetables and fruit, sustainably raised meat, and wild caught fish when possible.
2. Next I recommend everyone take a **good multi-vitamin**. Stress can increase our need for certain vitamins. Often it's very hard to get enough vitamins and minerals from foods that are not sustainably produced. Minerals can only come from the soil and unless the farmer is adding compost and organic materials in every year the plants will not produce the minerals that we need if the soil is mineral deficient.
3. One very important vitamin to take is **vitamin D**. Vitamin D is also known as the sunshine vitamin since we used to be able to absorb enough of it through our skin. Nowadays it's hard to get sufficient Vitamin D on a daily basis because most of us work indoors, and use sunscreen when outside

blocking its absorption. Vitamin D helps maintain a healthy immune system; it can prevent colds and flu. And helps you deal with stress and anxiety.

You can check my website for recommended nutrients and supplements. These come from vendors that I have been personally using for years. And I know they use good science and ethics in their formulations and manufacturing process. For more in-depth reading you can consult the books listed below.

Recommended Reading

- “Nourishing Traditions” by Sally Fallon
- “The End To Over Eating” by David Kessler
- “Strong Woman Stay Young” by Miriam Nelson