Men, Women and Stress—It’s Not One Size Fits All

If you’ve ever been frustrated with the way the opposite sex reacts to a problem you have shared with them, it helps to know there are innate differences in the way men and women handle stress.

STRESS THEN, STRESS NOW

To understand these differences, we have to first examine the initial purpose of stress. Primitive man relied on his body’s system to gear up for flight or fight. When he was threatened, his adrenal system started to furiously pump out stress hormones, and he used every bit of the magical substance to save his hide. Now however, whatever benefit stress may once have offered has mostly disappeared.

But today anxieties are different: Modern man deals mostly with emotional stresses instead of physical ones, though his body cannot discern the difference. Modern social protocol makes it inappropriate for us to fight or run away from worrisome circumstances. So while the adrenal system keeps on pumping for our lives, our minds instruct us to keep cool.

HORMONAL DIFFERENCES

Three stress hormones are involved in the flight or fight syndrome: cortisol, epinephrine, and oxytocin. Cortisol and epinephrine lower immunities and raise blood pressure. Oxytocin softens the reaction of cortisol and epinephrine by relaxing the emotions. Men release less oxytocin than women, and therefore have a stronger reaction from both cortisol and epinephrine.

Because of the increase of oxytocin and the reproductive hormones, such as estrogen, women are tenderized to nurture and reach out to others in an effort to both protect themselves and their young. Women are about relationships. In fact, physiologically, their self-esteem and identity are both dependent upon their feelings of adequacy in relationships.

Men, on the other hand, are problem solvers. They compartmentalize and repress their emotions to either fight or run away. Males are invested in performance and competition. They instinctively don’t pick up many social cues and innately view eye contact as a challenge. So when your male companion says, “I...
Low testosterone, also known as “low T,” is a common condition in men as they get older. Testosterone levels naturally decline with age. In their 60s, roughly 20 percent of men have low testosterone, according to the Urology Care Foundation. Among men in their 70s, that number rises to 30 percent. And by the time men have reached their 80s, about half of them have had a significant drop in testosterone levels.

Why do testosterone levels drop?
Decreasing levels of testosterone are a natural part of the aging process. The older a man gets, the lower his testosterone levels may drop. Several factors other than aging can also lead to low testosterone. These include injuries to the testicles as well as chemotherapy or radiation for treating cancer in the genital area. Other causes include diseases of the pituitary gland, and medicines that affect this gland, such as steroids.

Diabetes and Low Testosterone
The link between diabetes and low testosterone is well established. Testosterone helps the body’s tissues take up more blood sugar in response to insulin. Men with low testosterone more often have insulin resistance so, they need to produce more insulin to keep blood sugar normal. The cycle can be detrimental to health. As a result, men with diabetes are more likely to have low testosterone. And men with low testosterone are more likely to later develop diabetes.

Obesity and Low Testosterone
Obesity and low testosterone are tightly linked as well. Fat cells metabolize testosterone to estrogen, lowering testosterone levels. Obesity also reduces levels of sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG), a protein that carries testosterone in the blood. Less SHBG means less testosterone. Here, a similar cycle exists - obese men are more likely to have low testosterone; and men with very low testosterone are also more likely to become obese.

Testosterone Levels and Other Health Issues
While testosterone deficiency is connected to insulin resistance, obesity, and diabetes, low levels of this hormone are also associated with these medical conditions as well:
- Arthrosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)
- Depression
- Low libido
- Elevated blood pressure
- Erectile dysfunction

Options for Raising Testosterone Levels
While pharmaceutical options for raising testosterone levels are available (rub on gels, hormone injections and under-the-skin implants) they have their risks. Testosterone can be transferred through skin contact and utilizing these options may expose other family members. This can be particularly worrisome for women, playing a potential role in their hormone imbalances.

If you're looking for ways to boost your testosterone level, start by looking at your daily habits. Some changes that are good for your overall health could also provide benefits in helping to maintain a healthy level of this important male hormone. Recommendations include:

Get Enough Sleep.
George Yu, MD, a urology professor at the George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, D.C., says that, for many men with low testosterone, poor sleep is the most important factor. A lack of sleep affects a variety of hormones and chemicals in your body. This, in turn, can have a harmful impact on your testosterone.

Make sleep a priority, aiming for 7 to 8 hours per night, even if it means rearranging your schedule or dropping your habit of late-night TV. Prize your sleep, just like you’d prize a healthy diet and active lifestyle. It’s that important.

Keep a Healthy Weight.
Men who are overweight or obese often have low testosterone levels, says Alvin M. Matsumoto, MD, of the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle.

For those men, losing the extra weight can help bring testosterone back up, he says. Likewise, for men who are under-weight, getting your weight up to a healthy level can also have a positive effect on the hormone.

Stay Active.
Testosterone adapts to your body’s needs, Yu says. If you spend most of your time lying on the couch, your brain gets the message that you don’t need as much to bolster your muscles and bones.

But, he says, when you’re physically active, your brain sends out the signal for more of the hormone.

Take Control of Your Stress.
If you’re under constant stress, your body will churn out a steady stream of the stress hormone cortisol. When it does, it will be less able to create testosterone. So, controlling your stress is important for keeping up your testosterone.

- Spend 2 hours a day on activities you like that aren’t work- or exercise-related, such as reading or playing music.
- Cut back on long work hours. If you’re logging lots of overtime, try to whittle your workday down to 10 hours or less.

http://www.webmd.com/men/what-low-testosterone-can-mean-your-health#1
http://www.webmd.com/men/features/can-you-boost-testosterone-naturally#1

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**Chilled Cantaloupe Soup w/ Ginger & Mint**

Chilled soups are simple, refreshing, and they require little or no cooking whatsoever. This soup is light and refreshing, with a perfect balance of sweet and savory wrapped up in a smooth creamy texture. Enjoy!

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 ripe cantaloupe
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons cream
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon minced or grated fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1 small sprig of fresh mint
- Pinch of salt

**DIRECTIONS**
- Peel & slice the cantaloupe into large chunks.
- Place the cantaloupe pieces, yogurt, lemon juice, honey, ginger, and salt into a food processor or blender. Blend until the mixture is smooth & creamy. Taste, and adjust seasonings as needed. Add in a few mint leaves and pulse a few times, until mint is chopped and incorporated into the mix.
- Pour mixture into an airtight container and chill in the refrigerator for an hour before serving. Prior to serving, stir in the cream. Ladle into cups or small bowls and garnish with a mint leaf.
Eating well is one of life’s greatest pleasures. Having diabetes shouldn’t keep you from enjoying a wide variety of foods including some of your favorites. Making healthy food choices can lower your risk of developing diabetes or its complications. Food can either promote diabetes or help prevent it, depending on how it affects the body’s ability to process glucose,” says Elizabeth Ricanati, MD, medical director of the Cleveland Clinic’s Lifestyle 180 Program in Cleveland. “People should avoid foods that increase blood sugar and those that raise cholesterol, such as processed foods, foods high in saturated fats or with trans-fats, and foods with added sugars and syrups.”

Processed foods as well as items high in fat or sugar not only can disrupt the balance between glucose and insulin, resulting in inflammation, but can also contribute to risk factors such as being overweight.

A healthy diet for diabetes is virtually the same as a healthy diet for anyone. Eat reasonably sized portions to avoid gaining weight, and include fruits and vegetables (limit juice to no more than eight ounces a day); whole grains rather than processed ones; fish and lean cuts of meat; beans and legumes; and liquid oils. Check out the video below to learn more information about foods that help you meet your nutritional needs and lower your risk of diabetes.

Diet and Diabetes

We teach best what we most need to learn.

Attitude is Everything!

Unscramble each of the clue words.

Take the letters that appear in boxes and unscramble them for the final message.

TESPOIVI
MEVTOODTIA
CUSSCSE
PECRVTISEPE
MIAPOHNC
LUITEATD
NOTSOUCAGI
GARESSENT
PITERETSNS
DOEFICNNT
COUPIVDERT
HAEVECII
VOYRICT
RHPAACOP
TEMNIDS
HEALTYH

The first 3 people to send an email with the hidden message revealed will win a gift card!!

Congratulations to last month’s winners:
Lisa W. (Lynchburg College)
Janice Q (Lynchburg College)
Celena M (Lynchburg College)

Click the image to see part 1 of the Diet and Diabetes video series.
The Truth About Belly Fat

If you're carrying a few extra pounds, you're not alone. But this is one case where following the crowd isn't a good idea. Carrying extra weight — especially belly fat — can be risky.

**Belly Fat Is a More Dangerous Fat**

The trouble with belly fat is that it's not limited to the extra layer of padding located just below the skin (subcutaneous fat). It also includes visceral fat — which lies deep inside your abdomen, surrounding your internal organs.

Regardless of your overall weight, having a large amount of belly fat increases your risk of:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes
- Colorectal cancer
- Sleep apnea
- Premature death from any cause
- High blood pressure

**Age and Genetics May Contribute to Gaining Belly Fat**

Your weight is largely determined by how you balance the calories you eat with the energy you burn. If you eat too much and exercise too little, you're likely to pack on excess pounds — including belly fat.

Aging does play a role too. As you age, you lose muscle — especially if you're not physically active. Loss of muscle mass decreases the rate at which your body uses calories, which can make it more challenging to maintain a healthy weight. According to the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, men in their 50s need about 200 fewer calories daily than they do in their 30s due to this muscle loss.

Your genes can also contribute to your chances of being overweight or obese, as well as play a role in where you store fat. However, balancing the calories you consume with activity can help prevent weight gain, despite your age and genetics.

**Losing Weight and Exercising Will Shrink Your Middle**

You can tone abdominal muscles with crunches or other targeted abdominal exercises, but just doing these exercises won’t get rid of belly fat. Visceral fat responds to the same diet and exercise strategies that can help you shed excess pounds and lower your total body fat. To battle the bulge:

**Eat a Healthy Diet.** Emphasize plant-based foods, such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Choose lean sources of protein such as fish and low-fat dairy products. Limit saturated fat, found in meat and high-fat dairy products, such as cheese and butter. Also limit processed meats.

Choose moderate amounts of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats — found in fish, nuts and certain vegetable oils — instead.

**Keep Portion Sizes in Check.** Even when you're making healthy choices, calories add up. At home, slim down your portion sizes. In restaurants, share meals — or eat half your meal and take the rest home.

**Replace Sugary Beverages.** Make water your drink of choice, with an occasional glass of fruit juice or other beverage as a treat.

**Include Physical Activity in Your Daily Routine.** For most healthy adults, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends moderate aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, for at least 150 minutes a week or vigorous aerobic activity, such as jogging, for at least 75 minutes a week. In addition, strength training exercises are recommended at least twice a week. If you want to lose weight or meet specific fitness goals, you might need to exercise more.

Losing belly fat takes effort and patience. To lose excess fat and keep it from coming back, aim for slow and steady weight loss. Consult your doctor for help getting started and staying on track.


Men, Women and Stress (continued)

didn't know you were angry,“ even though you didn’t look at him all day because you were upset with him, he may be telling the truth. Another example of this difference: A little boy will have a play date with another child, wondering all along if his toys are better and if he can win. Meanwhile, a little girl will give another child her favorite doll in the hopes that she will just be her friend.

Men let competitors’ accomplishments and employer’s ambitions establish demand ranges, inhibiting self-attention and directing it towards winning. Thus, for a woman, the worst stress is a threat to her relationships, and for a man, it is the inability to perform, compete, and achieve.

Women will often sacrifice their own needs for the needs of others. Their self-esteem is so wrapped up in relationships that a woman may let others’ needs determine her stress limits, while ignoring her own needs. Therefore, women get caught up in the dilemma of over-demand and insufficient self-maintenance, while men repress and compartmentalize their feelings of stress in an effort to attain an extrinsic object. Hence, the self-management and self-maintenance demand is different for men and women.

Women nurture and reach out to others when confronted by stress. They seek support and talk-therapy to lower their anxiety and find a solution or answer to their problems. By processing emotionally what has occurred, women share the stress of their predicament.

Men seek escape when confronted by stress. They compartmentalize and repress their feelings in an effort to get away from their dilemma. They change the subject through diversions, such as sports and clubs. They do not, however, emote or discuss their feelings, but rather hit that tennis or golf ball, competitively.

**Working Through Stress Together**

Stress management can be taught to both men and women, and more importantly, they can practice it together. Inner work, such as meditation and yoga, are effective in managing stress. Exercise, diet, and a normal sleep regimen are also effective in reducing stress.

The key is to understand the difference between how partners react to stress. This helps us not take everything personally, but rather understand each other, and by so doing, we can better understand ourselves.

Being authentic and aware of our demands and limitations can help us to recognize, acknowledge, and alleviate the stress in our lives — just as using simple words such as “yes” and “no” can manage demands and self-maintenance. It is not stress itself that is destructive, but the way we respond to it. The famous philosopher William James said, “We carry within us that for which we search outside.”

In our modern world, we are offered a beguiling assortment of quick cures for what stresses us and get sidetracked from the pursuit of peace, health, love, and beauty. This is a world where migraines, frustration and stress are the order of the day. Coping with stress and learning how to self-manage, with our partner, can reverse illness, premature aging and heal the spirit.