

***"A highly important change has occurred in the incidence of disease in our country . . . serious infections, formerly extensive and disastrous, have markedly decreased or almost disappeared, . . . meanwhile conditions involving strain in the nervous system have been greatly augmented"***  
***("The role of emotion in disease") Annals of Internal Medicine 5/36***

### **Stress is Stressful.**

Life in the new millennium is stressful for most. Changes are occurring rapidly in society, technology and in the world in general. These changes include: Life style changes, changing moral values, changes in career, family and finances. Stress involves changes in the body's chemical, mental, emotional, and physiological reactions to accommodate a situation that is new or frightening. This response triggers changes within the autonomic nervous system to prepare for a 'fight or flight' response.

That natural 'fight or flight' response gives us the speed and endurance to escape physical dangers. This is a beneficial response to stress. However, when stress triggers the 'fight or flight' hormones in response to daily stressors, other hormones released into the blood stream may then contribute to: Accelerated aging, depression, chronic fatigue syndrome, immune system, dysfunction, sleep disorders, obesity, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, increased menopausal symptoms, and decreased memory.

It has been shown in studies of women suffering from depression that the level of bone loss is surprisingly high and rapid. Studies of marital disagreement show release of 'fight or flight' hormones. The stress hormone levels among women showed that they were much more sensitive to negative behavior than their husbands. If hormone levels stay elevated for extended periods of time the susceptibility to disease and illness rises rapidly.

### **How stress affects the immune system?**

Research has proven that not only does stress diminish the body's ability to defend against potential invaders such as germs and viruses, even the day-in-and-day-out effects of stress take their toll. The body's ability to produce antibodies when under stress is extremely minimized. Without adequate remedies to reduce the negative effects of stress your body will not be able to be all that it could be.

In a stressful situation (acute physical stress, chronic physical stress, emotional or psychological stress) the adrenal glands shift from hormone production to primarily cortisol production. If you are in danger cortisol will help to save your life, but if you are under prolonged stress these same hormones can lead to the demise of your health. Prolonged stress eventually causes adrenal fatigue (malfunction). As the adrenals begin to wear out it is important to remove or at least reduce the stress and provide appropriate nutrition to minimize the negative influence on the adrenal glands.

The slow insidious wear and tear of daily stressors lowers the body's ability to fight infections. Holmes and Rahe created the Social Readjustment Rating Scale to objectively measure the cumulative totality of stress and its effect upon the body. What it clearly demonstrates is that the more life change units an individual has been subjected to, the greater the probability that one is going to experience the negative effects of stress. Disease and illness do not just happen at random, they occur when an individual's body is no longer able to resist the negative influences such as sickness and disease. Take the stress test and see where you are.

### **Social Readjustment Rating Scale**

Record each event that has happened to you over the past twelve months by writing the number on the left in the right column.

- |     |   |       |
|-----|---|-------|
| 100 | Death of spouse   | _____ |
| 65  | Marital separation                                      | _____ |
| 63  | Jail term   | _____ |
| 53  | Personal injury or illness                              | _____ |
| 50  | Marriage  | _____ |
| 47  | Fired at work   | _____ |
| 45  | Retirement  | _____ |
| 44  | Change in health of a family member                     | _____ |
| 40  | Pregnancy   | _____ |
| 39  | Sexual difficulties                                     | _____ |
| 39  | Gain of a new family member                             | _____ |
| 39  | Business readjustment                                   | _____ |
| 38  | Change in financial state                               | _____ |
| 37  | Death of a close friend                                 | _____ |
| 36  | Change to a different line of work                      | _____ |
| 35  | Change in number of arguments with spouse               | _____ |
| 31  | Taking out a mortgage or loan over \$10,000             | _____ |
| 30  | Foreclosure of a mortgage or a loan                     | _____ |
| 29  | Change in your responsibilities at work                 | _____ |
| 29  | A son or daughter leaving home                          | _____ |
| 29  | Having trouble with your in-laws                        | _____ |
| 28  | An outstanding personal achievement                     | _____ |
| 26  | A spouse begins or stops work                           | _____ |
| 25  | You begin or end school                                 | _____ |
| 24  | Change in your living conditions                        | _____ |
| 23  | A revision of your personal habits                      | _____ |
| 20  | Having trouble with your boss                           | _____ |
| 20  | A change in your work hours or conditions               | _____ |
| 20  | A change in your residence                              | _____ |
| 19  | Changing schools  | _____ |
| 19  | A change in your recreational activities                | _____ |
| 19  | A change in your church activities                      | _____ |
| 18  | A change in your social activities                      | _____ |
| 17  | Taking out a mortgage or loan for less than \$10,000    | _____ |
| 16  | A change in your sleeping habits                        | _____ |
| 15  | A change in the number of family get-togethers          | _____ |
| 13  | Taking a vacation                                       | _____ |
| 12  | Christmas or a major holiday                            | _____ |
| 11  | Minor violation of law including moving traffic tickets | _____ |

Add the total number of points and compare with the following chart:

Score	Life Crisis Level	Probability of Illness
0 - 149	Normal	1%
150 - 199	Mild life crisis	33%
200 - 299	Moderate life crisis	50%
300+	Severe life crisis	80%