

Stress Leads to Illness and Injury

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are [available in Spanish at www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com).

KEY POINTS:

- Too much stress can result in serious illness or injury.
- Talking about your stress to a person you trust can help.
- Eating right, getting exercise, and balancing work and play will help reduce stress.

Note to trainer: Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.

What is stress?

- Stress is our body's reaction to increased demands that are placed on us. Stressful reactions may result from:
 - dangerous or threatening situations,
 - new situations, or
 - unpleasant situations.
- When faced with these situations, our muscles may tense up. Our hearts may beat faster, our breathing may speed up, and our blood pressure may rise.
- Other physical symptoms of stress may include:
 - headaches, stomachaches, backaches, sweatiness, the loss of appetite, or an inability to sleep.
- Stress can also result in emotional reactions such as irritability, anger, crying, jumpiness, or a lack of concentration.
- Some specific events that typically result in stress are a death in the family, the breakup of a marriage or other relationship, financial troubles, poor health, a seriously ill spouse or child, moving, a change in jobs, the loss of a job, or an unpleasant working environment.
- What's stressful for one person may not be stressful for another. And while a little bit of stress doesn't hurt most people, too much stress can result in serious illness or injury.

Health problems and stress

- It's important to be aware of stress, because if it becomes too great it can result in physical illness, emotional illness, or injuries at work or at home.
- Among the health problems that may be associated with stress are heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep disorders, diabetes, strokes, colds or the flu, allergies, ulcers, or nervous breakdowns.
- One very poor way to cope with stress is to abuse alcohol or illegal or prescription drugs. This can lead to even more health problems.
- Smoking is also a poor way to cope with stress.



Drinking alcohol and smoking are poor ways to cope with stress.

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Injuries from stress

- Being under stress increases your risk of injury on or off the job.
- Most accidents are the result of human error. If you're under a lot of stress and can't concentrate on what you're doing, you're at increased risk for an accident.
- It's important that you **never** operate dangerous equipment or machinery if you are fatigued, overly anxious, or are having difficulty concentrating.
- We encourage you to get help if you are under stress so you don't threaten your own health and safety or that of others.

Note to trainer: Let trainees know who in your operation they can confidentially talk to about stress-related problems.



Never operate dangerous machinery when you are under a lot of stress.

Tips for reducing stress

- 1. Eat right.** Eat healthy foods, and don't skip meals.
- 2. Get regular exercise.** Aerobic exercise is one good way to help reduce stress.
- 3. Get enough sleep.** Also, allow enough time to get ready for work.
- 4. Avoid self-medication.** Drinking alcohol or taking other drugs, unless they're prescribed by a doctor, can result in even more problems.
- 5. Balance work and play.** Take time away from work to have fun.
- 6. Plan ahead.** Think about the tasks you need to do and how much time they'll take. Then try to allow enough time to complete them.
- 7. Break big jobs down into smaller ones.** This will help keep you from feeling overwhelmed.
- 8. Learn to say "no."** Don't overcommit yourself or take on more than you can handle.
- 9. Set priorities.** Decide what's most important, and do that first.
- 10. Take breaks.** Working long hours through lunch and not taking scheduled breaks will only increase your stress level.
- 11. Talk to others.** Talking out your problems with a friend, family member, your supervisor, our human resources or personnel director, a counselor or a member of the clergy is a good way to help release stress.



Physical exercise is good way to reduce stress.

Are there any questions?

Note to trainer: Take time to answer trainees' questions. Then review the **Stress Reduction Do's and Don'ts**.

STRESS REDUCTION DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:

- Find moments to relax during the day. Take time to smile.
- Have a positive attitude. Look for the good in situations.
- Try talking with the source of the problem if it is an individual that's causing your stress.

DON'T:

- Operate dangerous equipment or machinery if you are under stress.
- Self-medicate. Taking drugs without a doctor's prescription or drinking alcohol can lead to even more problems.
- Keep your stress bottled up inside.

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