



# Stress & Mind/Body Health FAQs

## **What is mind/body health?**

Research shows that there is an important connection between psychological and physical health and the ways that they interact to maintain overall well-being. Achieving mind/body health comes from balancing psychological and physical health so that each works to support the other. Identifying ways to manage stress and emotions that can alter this balance is important for improved mind/body health.

## **How does stress affect mind/body health?**

Ongoing stress and the ways people deal with stress can have negative consequences on both physical and psychological health. People experiencing stress generally feel less healthy — physically and psychologically. Adults reporting a great deal of stress in their lives rate their psychological and physical health lower than adults who are not experiencing stress.

## **What symptoms do people report in relation to stress?**

People experiencing the greatest amount of stress reported a pattern of both psychological and physical symptoms. The most common symptoms of stress mentioned include feelings of nervousness or sadness, irritability or anger, trouble sleeping, lack of energy, and fatigue. Additionally, Americans who are very concerned about stress in their lives are more likely to report specific ailments such as hypertension, anxiety or depression, and obesity.

## **Who experiences stress?**

Nearly all Americans feel stress, and the potential health complications of stress make it a serious health problem in the United States. Women reported higher rates of stress in their lives, putting them at a higher risk for physical ailments related to stress and the ways they manage stress.

## **What are the leading causes of stress?**

Americans reported work and money as the leading causes of stress. Women were more concerned with financial issues than men. Overall, women reported more stressors in their lives. Additional sources of stress for Americans include health of family and parents, children, and personal safety.

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## **How do women and men experience stress differently?**

Women are much more likely than men to report sources and symptoms of stress, and will more often admit concerns about stress in their lives. In addition to differences in acknowledging stress, women and men report differing psychological and physical symptoms — women are more likely to experience nervousness, desire to cry and a lack of energy when they are feeling stressed, while men experience trouble sleeping and feelings of irritability or anger. Women are also more likely than men to report stress-related health problems such as hypertension, anxiety or depression, and obesity.

## **How are stress levels affected by parenthood?**

Children are a source of stress for all parents — half of parents (53 percent) are concerned about stress, versus 44 percent of those without kids at home. Parenting is particularly stressful for parents who are not married and do not have someone with whom to share the responsibilities. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of single parents are concerned about stress, compared to 50 percent of married parents.

## **When do people report experiencing the most stress in their lives?**

People in their forties report higher levels of stress than people in their twenties and thirties. (58 percent, versus 48 percent of those in their 20s and 30s and 49 percent of those ages 50-64). Forty-somethings are in a transition period, still working long hours but finding new sources of stress from home while others have not yet abated. Most 40-somethings work full-time (59 percent) and many cite “too heavy a workload” as one of the key sources of stress at work (23 percent “very significant” source of stress). Most women in this age group are in the workforce; they are less likely than younger women to be homemakers (15 percent versus 23 percent). To this, 40-somethings have family pressures; 40-somethings are beginning to face problems with their parents’ health (26 percent “very significant” source of stress). Yet over half (54 percent) have children at home, and consistent with other parents, children remain a source of stress for this cohort (21 percent “very significant” source of stress).

## **How does caring for others’ health affect a person’s own stress levels?**

Stress is reported to be higher among the family’s health care decision maker, especially if that person is the sole decision maker for their family. More often, women feel responsible for making health care decisions. African-American women and Latinas are more likely to serve as health care managers for their families, and Latinas tend to feel more stress in their home life than at work, reporting family health concerns as a leading stressor.

## **What steps are Americans taking to reduce the levels of stress in their lives?**

Stressed out Americans are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors to manage their stress than to seek the support of friends, family or mental health professionals. One in four Americans turns to food to help alleviate stress, choosing unhealthy snacks and fast food more often. In addition, people who are more concerned with stress are more likely to be smokers. Unhealthy behaviors used to manage stress, such as comfort eating, smoking and inactivity, can lead to health complications including hypertension, anxiety or depression, and obesity, making stress a serious health problem in America.