

Take time to relax for wellbeing and wound healing benefits

Taking time to relax is helpful to reduce stress and can improve your mood, physical and mental health and wound healing ability. Here we explain how taking time to destress can benefit you.

What is stress?

Stress is a feeling of being under abnormal pressure, whether from an increased workload, an argument with a family member, or financial worries.

Stress affects everyone differently, in lots of ways, both physically and emotionally, and in varying amounts¹.

Stress can cause a variety of physical symptoms, such as headaches, muscle tension, pain, nausea, indigestion, dizziness, sweating, and changes in appetite. Stress can also affect our emotions and behaviour, making us feel anxious, irritable, low, or withdrawn¹.

What are the benefits of relaxing?

Relaxing can relieve stress and help alleviate its physical signs, for example, it can slow the heart rate, improve digestion and reduce activity of stress hormones.

Stress is known to delay wound healing by affecting the early stage of healing, which can then have a knock-on-effect on the rest of the wound healing process².

How can you address stress?

- **Keeping active.** Exercise can help boost your mood and clear your thoughts. This should help you address any problems in a calm way
- **Taking control.** Taking control of your situation allows you to find a solution to your problem. A lack of control can actually cause stress and lack of wellbeing
- **Talking to friends.** Talking to your friends and colleagues can often help relieve stress as they will often see things in a way you hadn't thought of. The old saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved' is very true
- **Take some time for you.** Prioritise things that make you happy to balance the time you spend working. This may be socialising, relaxing or exercising. Mindfulness is a technique you can learn which involves noticing what's happening in the present moment. You might take notice and be aware of your mind, body or surroundings. It can help some people feel calmer and less stressed
- **Setting challenges.** There are lots

of things you can do to help build your confidence, challenge yourself and relieve stress. Why not try a new hobby or learn a language?

- **Don't rely on unhealthy habits.** Alcohol, smoking and caffeine are not the best ways to deal with stress as they only make you feel better for a short period of time, and they don't tackle the cause of the problem
- **Volunteering.** It has been shown that helping others or your community is a great way to make you feel better, feel more resilient and may relieve stress. This could be volunteering or just doing a good turn
- **Time management.** You can't always do everything so by doing the important things first and the least important things later, you may not feel overwhelmed and stressed

- **Positive thinking.** Try and be positive and think about the things that are good in your life, trying not to dwell on the things that are not so good. Positive thinking is a great way to reduce stress
- **Accepting things and moving on.** We can't control every situation and so trying to concentrate on the things that you are in control of is a good way forward
- **Share concerns.** If you have any concerns about your wound that are causing stress, speak to your healthcare professional about them and try to find a solution together.

Remember, investing time in reducing stress will have a positive affect on your wound healing, as well as improving your general health and wellbeing.

