People once hotly debated the idea stress can affect your body, but we now know stress can cause both short- and long-term changes to your body and mind. The more we understand how stress affects us, the more we learn about how to cope better.

Modern life frequently gives us little time between periods of stress for our body to recuperate. This chronic stress eventually takes both a mental and physical toll.

It’s long been known blood pressure and cholesterol levels go up in people who are stressed. Studies have now linked chronic stress with cardiovascular problems such as hypertension, coronary heart disease, and stroke.

The immune system is also affected by stress. Dr. Esther M. Sternberg at NIH’s National Institute of Mental Health says it makes sense for the immune system to gear up and get ready to heal potential wounds, but chronic stress can cause the system to backfire. Research has shown wounds in people under chronic stress heal more slowly.

Certain hormones which are released when you’re stressed out, such as cortisol and catecholamines, have been tied to these long-term effects of stress.

Do things which make you feel good about yourself mentally and physically, get enough sleep, eat a healthy diet, and exercise regularly. Develop a network of people you can turn to in difficult times.

If you still find yourself too stressed out, talk to your healthcare professional. There are many therapies they may recommend to help you deal with stress and its consequences.

**Ways of Reducing Stress**

- Get enough sleep
- Exercise and control your diet
- Build a social support network
- Create peaceful times in your day
- Try different relaxation methods until you find one that works for you
- Don’t smoke
- Don’t drink too much or abuse any other substances