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Essay Paper

Nutritional Challenges for Psychosomatic Stressed Women

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Women in India today are linked to the global economy to a very significant extent as Producers, Entrepreneurs, Service Providers, Consumers and Citizens. Stress is a common problem that we all have to deal within our lives. Today 60-90% people are seeking and its mail reason stress. Every person has to experience many types of stress in their life. Many health problems pertaining with excessive stress such as Coronary Heart Disease and stroke, impaired immune system and insomnia etc.

There are four types of Stressors that cause a stress reaction in the body.

1. **Emotional symptoms:** Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, and moody, Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control, Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind, Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless, and depressed, Avoiding others. Where our organs work overtime to enable us to keep functioning when under pressure- our fight or flight response.

2. **Physical symptoms**: Physical inactivity or over activity, noise, pollution, lack of sleep, low energy, Headaches, Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation, and nausea, Aches, pains, and tense muscles, Chest pain and rapid heartbeat, Insomnia, Frequent colds and infections, Loss of sexual desire and/or ability, Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear cold or sweaty hands and feet, Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing, Clenched jaw and grinding teeth).

3. **Cognitive symptoms:** Constant worrying, Racing thoughts, Forgetfulness and disorganization, Inability to focus, Poor judgment, Being pessimistic or seeing only the negative side.

4. **Behavioral symptoms: Changes** in appetite -- either not eating or eating too much, Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities, Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes, Exhibiting more nervous behaviors, such as nail biting, fidgeting, and pacing. In the present Day stress has become part and parcel of life, nobody is exception right from the child to the aged.

Long-Term Stress can cause many serious health problems such as Mental health, problems, such as depression, anxiety and personality disorders, Cardiovascular disease, including Heart Disease, High Blood Pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks, and stroke, Obesity and other eating disorders, Menstrual problems, Sexual dysfunction, such as impotence and premature ejaculation in men and loss of sexual desire in both men and women, Skin and Hair problems, such as acne , psoriasis, and eczema, and permanent hair loss, Gastrointestinal problems, such as gastritis, ulcerative colitis, and irritable colon [1-11]. If the stress is not managed properly by identifying the sources causes and related systems which in turned in psychosomatic diseases.

The term 'psychosomatic' refers to the connection or the interaction between the body and mind, psychosomatic illness refers to a physical dysfunction that is primarily caused by some form of emotional or mental stress - mild depression, work-related stress and even extreme personality traits can cause psychosomatic illness [1-3]. The branch of medical science that studies the relation between physical and emotional state. Behavioral counseling is the best to prevent and treat such psychosomatic diseases.

Some people also use the term psychosomatic disorder when mental factors cause physical symptoms but where there is no physical disease. For example, a chest pain may be caused by stress and no physical disease can be found. It is well known that the mind can cause physical symptoms. For example, when we are afraid or anxious we may develop: A fast heart rate, A thumping heart (palpitations), Feeling sick (nauseated), Shaking (tremor), Sweating, Dry mouth, Chest pain, Headaches, A knot in the stomach, Fast breathing. These physical symptoms are due to increased activity of nervous impulses sent from the brain to various parts of the body and to the release of adrenaline (epinephrine) into the bloodstream when we are anxious [4-6].

In recent years, however, medicine has taken a greater interest in this field of mental pain and suffering. It is recognized today as a distinct clinical entity and is known under a variety of terms such as stress reaction, psychoneurosis, postconcussional syndrome,

and many other terms relating to the specific disorders of individual parts or organs of the body. All these various names and subdivisions can be grouped together under the general term, psychosomatic disease.

What are the treatments for psychosomatic disorders? Each disease has its own treatment options. For physical diseases, physical treatments such as medication or operations are usually the most important. However, healthcare workers will usually try to treat a person as a whole and take into account mental and social factors which may be contributing to a disease. Therefore, treatments to ease stress, anxiety, depression, etc, may help if they are thought to be contributing to your physical disease.

The first step is learning to recognize when we are under extreme stress. One way is by taking a Life Stress Test. This simple test rates various life events on a point scale. If you score high, then you are at high risk for developing stress-related illness. Another simple test to determine if you're feeling stressed: take both your hands and touch your neck. If your hand feels significantly colder than you neck, you are stressed. If they are warm, you are relaxed. Other ways you may show stress: sweaty palms, tense muscles, butterflies in the stomach, or rapid heart beat. Learn to recognize the signs of stress unique to you. When you are under stress - either physical or emotional - your body produces hormones which help you cope with that stress. When stress exceeds your body's coping resources, however, it may trigger an episode of depression. Stress management can be a powerful tool in preventing depression. Many people have techniques they use to help reduce their stress, such as deep breathing or aromatherapy.

Stress relieving

Stress is nothing but the accumulated unresolved thoughts. Thinking and search for solution is the basic technique of human behaviorism. To come out of such stress the following steps must help to all who will practice it.

- Step I: Sit in comfortable posture
- Step II: Clasp your palms together and keep on your lap
- Step III: Concentrate your mind at the centre of you eyebrow
- Step IV: Relax your body and mind
- Step V: Allow all the thoughts to come, don’t resist.

Allow the thought to suspend on your mind and you think deeper and deeper towards the non-thought state. Try to achieve mental void condition. Observer your breathing only. Don't control your breathing, only observe. Your breathing is an instrument to let you know your stress condition. More you relax, your breathing will be shortened. Wait for the shortest stroke of breathing. In such condition relax more and forget about breathing also. For sure you will be out of tension. Be in the same posture as long as you like. Detox is a natural, ongoing process of neutralizing and eliminating dietary and environmental toxins from the body. Certain foods can support, or even speed the process, by providing vitamins, antioxidants, minerals, essential fatty acids [7-9].

The link between stress and illness is becoming well-known but the extent to which stress affects our health is often under-estimated. We all experience some form of stress to some extent from time to time but it does not always make us ill.

Any disruption to our mental, emotional or spiritual health creates stress in our energy centers or Chakras so the more extreme or pro-longed the stress is, the more likely we are to experience a change in our physiology. Sometimes these changes go unnoticed until there is a severe dysfunction that causes us pain or discomfort [10,11]. It is worth noting that almost all physical illnesses have psychological factors that determine the etiology, prognosis, diagnosis, and treatment of psychosomatic disorders [12,13]. In modern society, psychosomatic manifestations of illness are often attributed to life stresses [14].

The Stress Reaction - How does stress affect the body?

Oxidative stress, defined as a disturbance In the balance between the production of reactive oxygen species (free radicles) and antioxidant defenses. Oxidation is a normal process by which our body uses oxygen for energy metabolism.

Excess physical, chemical or emotional pressure causes a 'stress reaction' in the body. The stress reaction is a state of 'overdrive' where our organs work overtime to enable us to keep functioning when under pressure- our fight-or flight or stress response.

Figure 1

During prolonged stress, the body is forced to maintain higher levels of these natural chemicals which eventually results in burnout. This is where the term 'adrenal fatigue' comes from - the adrenal system literally becomes fatigued from having to operate in overdrive for long periods. How long we can operate under this stress reaction all depends on our tolerance for stress or our 'stress threshold'.

The Stress Threshold - When does stress turn into illness?

Each person has a different tolerance level for stress. Some people handle stress well while others don't - it all comes down to individual make-up. When we reach our threshold for stress, some form of breakdown occurs, either physically, emotionally or both. It all depends on how much stress we endure and for how long - the effects eventually manifest in our physical health.

Figure 2

When we have a breakdown (or even a nervous breakdown), our bodies are naturally seeking an outlet in order to normalize our systems once again. When we fail to 'normalize' or find an outlet for our stress, it becomes our habitual way of functioning. This is when we cross the threshold from stress to chronic stress.

Stress is becoming inevitable these days in every organization and ultimately it is established to the Burnout.

This is because over time, chronic stress restricts the blood flow through the body and weakens the immune system which can eventually cause physical dysfunction. These changes happen gradually on a cellular level according to the principles of quantum healing.

Breaking the Stress Cycle - How can I avoid stress build-up?

Each moment of every day, we have a choice to hold on to feeling stressed or let go. When we find an outlet for our stress, it short-circuits the body, mind and soul to restore balance. To avoid the stress cycle, try finding an outlet next time you feel stressed as it lowers blood sugar, reduces stress hormones and adrenalin.

Figure 3

Often the process of dealing with a psychosomatic illness can be a cathartic release. For instance, the common cold is often a physical release of old habits and emotional attachments so it can be a cleansing experience. You might find that after a cold, you feel lighter or seem to have more clarity. This feeling occurs when a physical illness has provided the final release of our old ways of being.

What are the treatments for psychosomatic disorders?

The adverse effects of psychosomatic disorders, due to stress that includes hypertention, headache, pelvic pain etc., are well documented in the literature. Attempts are being made by several Investgators to find out the solutions to these disorders throughout the world. As a result, several methods like psychoanalysis, drug therapy, behaviourial therapy etc., have been developed. In addition, herbal therapy is also found to be uniquely suited to treat/manage these problems.

Each disease has its own treatment options. For physical diseases, physical treatments such as medication or operations are usually the most important. However, healthcare workers will usually try to treat a person as a whole and take into account mental and

social factors which may be contributing to a disease. Therefore, treatments to ease stress, anxiety, depression, etc, may help if they are thought to be contributing to your physical disease [8,10,11].

Stress-busting foods

Foods can help tame stress in several ways. Comfort foods, like a bowl of warm oatmeal, boost levels of serotonin, a calming brain chemical. Other foods can cut levels of cortisol and adrenaline, stress hormones that take a toll on the body over time. A healthy diet can help counter the impact of stress by --shoring up the immune system and lowering blood pressure. Traditionally the health fitness has been associated with nutritional factors such as fat, fiber, salt and vitamin content of food. Today the term nutraceutical is often and inter changeably used with functional food. The specific chemical components contained in functional foods which are established to be responsible for the beneficial impact on health are given the term nutraceuticals.

It's best to eat complex carbohydrates which take longer to digest. Good choices include whole-grain breads, pastas, and breakfast cereals, including old-fashioned oatmeal. Complex carbohydrates can also help you feel balanced by stabilizing blood sugar levels.

Studies suggest vitamin C can curb levels of stress hormones while strengthening the immune system.

Stress and nutrition have always been linked – it's a fact. Someone with a healthy and balanced diet is likely to be far less stresses than someone with a poor diet. Healthy nutritious food and breathing exercises are the simplest methods for relieving stress.. Foods with high vitamin and mineral levels actively help to reduce stress levels. Certain foods and drinks can aggravate stress. It dose not necessarily mean that you should avoid some of them completely, just consume them in moderation.

Spinach Fatty Fish; Black tea; pistachios; Fatty Fish (Omega- 3 Fatty acids); Almonds;Raw vegetables ; Milk and Herbal Suppliments and Pomegranates helps to reduce stress.

De-Stress with exercise

Besides changing your diet, one of the best stress-busting strategies is to start exercising. Aerobic exercise boosts oxygen circulation and spurs your body to make feel-good chemicals called endorphins. Aim for 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three to four times a week.

The wellness concept has captured the interest of public in the last few years. Wellness involves eating the right foods in the right amounts avoiding and reducing the intake of harmful substances, being physically active rather than sedentary – and getting appropriate amounts and kind of exercise and in general attending to put into practice preventive medicine.

Fresh fruit and vegetables provide an array of vitamins and minerals that are great for reducing stress. Vegetables also have a high fiber content, which is helpful in treating constipation – another long term effect of stress. To keep stress to a minimum, design a meal plan for the day that incorporates a big meal in the morning, something relatively light for lunch and another light meal in the evening.Salad before your evening meal with fruits and yoghurts is is a sure way to satisfy your appetite.

Consequently, stress management is crucial step in the treatment and prevention of psychosomatic diseases. Stress response is seen as a necessary adjunct to fight for survival. Safegaurding the mental health is the basis for a peaceful nation.

Stress buster serotonin may help treat neurological decline (Hindu News Paper,07-05-2019): Researchers at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) in their recent discovery established that serotonin is involved in the generation of new mitochondria (the power house of the cell) in neurons, increased cellular respiration and fuel (ATP) in the cell, thereby giving neurons to produce more energy and the ability to cope with stress.

This study paves way for further research into designing therapeutic interventions by combinined activation of serotonin either through pharmacological approaches or coupling approved drugs that activates serotonin signaling with dietary interventions like calorie restrictions. This may help tackle mood disorders and age-associated neurological decline.

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