

National Stress Management Month, How does this apply to Seniors?

Stress is an inevitable part of life that can affect people of all ages. However, as we age, the sources and impact of stress can change, making it crucial for seniors to understand how to manage stress effectively. **April is recognized as Stress Awareness Month**, a perfect time to shed light on the importance of stress management, especially for older adults. Let us explore unique stressors faced by seniors and provide methods to manage stress to maintain a happy and healthy lifestyle.

Understanding the unique stressors for senior citizens that are unique to this age group may include:

- **Health Concerns:** As we age, our bodies naturally become more susceptible to health issues, chronic conditions, and physical limitations. Dealing with health problems can be a significant source of stress.
- **Financial Worries:** Retirement, managing savings, and unexpected expenses can lead to financial stress for many older adults, especially those on fixed incomes.
- **Loss and Grief:** Loss of loved ones, friends, or pets, as well as adjusting to life changes such as retirement or moving to a new home, can be emotionally challenging and stressful.
- **Social Isolation:** Limited social interactions, feeling disconnected from family and friends, or experiencing loneliness can contribute to stress and negatively impact mental well-being.

Some tips for effectively managing stress for seniors:

- **Stay Active:** Physical activity is beneficial for overall health as well as help in reducing stress. Engaging in regular exercise, such as walking, swimming, or pickle ball can boost mood, improve sleep quality, and reduce anxiety and depression.
- **Maintain a Healthy Diet:** Eating a well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help support overall health and reduce stress. Avoiding excessive caffeine, alcohol, sugar, and processed foods contributes to better stress management.
- **Practice Relaxation Techniques:** Incorporating relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or progressive muscle relaxation into your daily routine can help reduce stress levels and promote a sense of calm and well-being.
- **Stay Connected:** Maintaining social connections and staying engaged with family, friends, and community activities can help combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. Consider joining clubs, volunteering, or participating in group activities to stay connected and build new relationships.

- **Seek Support:** Don't be afraid to reach out for help and support when needed. Talking to a trusted friend, family member, or medical professional can provide valuable perspective, encouragement, and coping strategies to better manage stress.
- **Prioritize Self-Care:** Make self-care a priority by engaging in activities that bring you joy and relaxation. Whether it's reading a book, listening to music, gardening, or pursuing a hobby, taking time for yourself can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being.

Focus on gradual changes, take small, manageable steps incorporating stress-reducing practices essential for everyone including seniors to enjoy a happier, healthy and fulfilling life.

References: <https://addus.com/feed/>, heart.org/HealthyForGood, <https://inspiredliving.care/april-is-stress-awareness-month-helping-seniors-combat-stress/d>

Written by Laurie Zirilli, registered dietitian, contract RD for Oneida County Office for the Aging. Oneida County OFA provides nutrition counseling and education for the aging. Questions about services and programs for older adults and caregivers, including the Senior Nutrition Program, should call Oneida County Office for the Aging at (315) 798-5456.

Cranberry Nut Energy Bites Makes: 30 Bites

Adapted From Hannaford Recipes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup dry old-fashioned oats
- 1/2 cup Oat & Ancient Grains Granola or your favorite granola
- 1 Tbsp. ground flaxseed
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup lightly salted mixed nuts, coarsely chopped (optional)
- 1 cup dates, coarsely chopped
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 cup crunchy or smooth almond or peanut butter
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Directions:

1. In a large mixing bowl, gently crush granola using a wooden spoon
2. In a small bowl, stir together peanut or almond butter, honey, and vanilla.
3. Mix well to combine peanut or almond butter mixture with the remaining dry ingredients, flaxseed, cranberries, nuts, dates, and cinnamon
4. Refrigerate for 2 hours.
5. Form mixture into 2-inch balls by firmly pressing with moist hands or a spoon.

Nutritional Information

Amount per serving: Calories 120; Total Fat 6 g; Saturated Fat 0.5 g; Sodium 15 mg; Carbohydrate 16 g; Dietary Fiber 2 g; Sugar 10 g; Added Sugar 6 g; Protein 3 g