



Updated July 2017

# Info Bulletin

## Stress and Forest Fires

It's a stressful time! Here's some helpful information about your health as you deal with the forest fires.

### Health & Nutrition

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#### How important is Nutrition during stressful times?

The priorities of our day-to-day lives can change during stressful situations. Eating healthily may drop to the bottom of the priority list. Unfortunately, this can make things worse.

#### What happens to your body during stress?

Stress causes the body to pump extra adrenalin, insulin, and other chemicals. Digestion is interrupted, muscles contract, and the immune system is put on alert. This "stress response" enables you to rally the power that you need to respond to an emergency. But if it happens too often, it can leave you exhausted.

#### What can you do?

- Keep your blood sugar level steady with a small meal or snack every two to four hours during the day. Choose foods that have a balance of protein, carbohydrate and fat. For example, a whole grain bagel, a slice of cheese and a piece of fruit. Complex carbohydrates and vegetables, like grains can elevate serotonin in your brain, making you feel more relaxed.
- Drinking plenty of water to boost your energy level as well as rehydrate you in this hot dry weather. Limit caffeine and alcohol, which are dehydrating and may put you on edge. Eating fruits and vegetables, which are made of mostly water, helps you get your nutrition and fluid needs met at the same time.
- Quick snacks/meals.
- Keep whole grain crackers, cheese packages, yogurt, small cartons of milk, fresh and dried fruit, 100% juice boxes, ready-to-use packages of carrots, bottled water and peanut butter portions on hand to assemble quick snacks or meals.

### Stress & Anxiety

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#### Are you feeling highly stressed or anxious?

The effect of forest fires close to your home is significant. It is completely normal to be feeling stressed or anxious during this time.

## What's a Normal reaction to stress?

### Your Body

- Upset stomach or excessive sweating; difficulty moving your body or tremors are ALL normal. Fast heart rate, high blood pressure, headaches, sore muscles or feeling really tired are ALL normal.
- If you have chest pains or difficulty breathing, see a doctor immediately.

### Your Brain

A hard time concentrating, feeling confused or being forgetful are ALL normal. So are having memories of what you have seen (flashbacks).

### Your Feelings

- Anxiety, guilt, fear, grief and depression are ALL normal. So is feeling nothing at all or feeling lost, alone and helpless. Withdrawing from others, anger, resentment and wanting to place blame, feeling numb, shocked and overwhelmed are ALL normal feelings related to stress.

## How should you deal with stress?

Anyone can experience a reaction to stress, including children. Everyone experiences it differently. Some people experience symptoms for a long time. Most people feel worse before they feel better. Don't avoid how you feel. It must be worked through.

- Don't drink a lot of alcohol.
- Do expect what has happened to bother you.
- Avoid using legal or illegal substances to numb your stress reactions.
- Try to eat well and exercise and take time for the things you enjoy.
- Don't spend all your time alone or automatically stay away from work.
- Remind yourself stress reactions are normal.
- Don't think you are "crazy."
- Get extra help in you need it. Support and Counseling help.

### For more information, call:

HealthLink BC <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kbaltindex.asp>

Available 24 Hours Toll Free at 8-1-1.

For more information visit our web site at [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca).

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