

STRESS, CHRISTMASTIME AND SICKNESS

By Dr. Derek Conte

Let's go shopping for the gifts, the tree, the lights, the food, the wine and garlands. Let's go caroling in the neighborhood. Let's pack up and jump on a plane to see grandma! How wonderful are the love and joy of Christmastime and the entire holiday season and how often with it inevitably go things like stress and sickness.

Stress ignites a cascade of physiological events that can steal our enjoyment of the season like the Grinch himself. Headaches, palpitations, tight muscles, earaches, sinus pain, sore throat, colds and the flu are frequent. Why? Stress causes a reflex known as the "FLIGHT or FLIGHT" response which is unnatural to all animals and intended to protect us in times of emergency such as during an earthquake or any life-threatening situation. A mother, upon sensing a threat to her child, will respond instinctively and with extraordinary strength to protect the child and destroy the threat. But exactly what happens in the body to produce this reflex and can it be harmful to us if it comes at inappropriate times or lasts too long?

This is what happens to the body under stress: the quick-acting hormone, *epinephrine (adrenaline)* is released causing the heart to jump and vessels to constrict, driving up the blood

pressure. The pupils dilate and the skin tightens making our body hairs stand on end. Blood flows away from the organs and toward the arms and legs in

readiness of confrontation. Digestion and bowel function are frozen. (Why waste valuable energy when a grizzly is bearing down on you?) Our sense of time and space are altered, slowing things down. Rational judgment is reduced and anxiety enters the scene. If this state of stress endures, the powerful, long-tasting hormone, *cortisol* is released which shuts off the immune system,

exposing us to infections and serious illnesses like cancer.

Again: High blood pressure, reduced blood supply, altered judgment and a compromised immune system - the perfect recipe for constitutional breakdown. In fact, this is the state deliberately induced in POW's before interrogation and brainwashing begin! Fear, worry, anger and resentment all tend to arouse this state.

Chiropractors are highly trained in detecting stress in the body and removing it, without drugs, using specific adjustments to the spine. When the body is relaxed, the mind and spirit are also. This is the best way to enjoy the holidays and any day in your life.

God Bless.

CORRECTION

A sentence in Dr. December column was incorrect should have read:

"Stress causes a reflex as the "FIGHT or FLIGHT" which is natural to all animals intended to protect us in times of emergency such as during an earthquake or any life-threatening situation.



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