**SUFFERING FROM STRESS?**

If you’re stressed, the first step towards feeling better is to identify the cause if you can, so that you can start to feel in control again. It may simply be a matter of time management, choosing your goals and prioritising what is important to you. Making decisions about those things can make you feel you’re back in control as well as more focused and relaxed.

Here are some more tips that can help to reduce stress and increase your sense of wellbeing and happiness. If it’s hard to work out why you feel stressed these ideas could still help you.

* **Exercise.** Its’s free, easy to take and has an immediate effect. It lowers a whole range of health risks, raises the level of feel-good hormones in the brain and can help you to clear your thoughts. And if you don’t feel like doing it, that’s a good reason to go for a walk and get your energy flowing!
* **Connect with people.** Having a laugh with friends is a great stress-reliever, and talking things through with someone you trust can help you find solutions to your problems.
* **Have some quality time** doing things you enjoy and find relaxing.
* **Challenge yourself and build confidence** by learning or doing something new. It can be anything you choose – some new recipes, a sport you haven't tried before, a new language or skill, visiting a new place… whatever appeals to you.
* **Avoid unhealthy habits** such as smoking and excessive drinking. Those things won’t solve your problem and may create new ones.
* **Help other people.** It can be a small thing – a smile or a kind word – or a bigger commitment such as volunteering, depending on how much time you can spare.
* **Manage your thoughts** by deliberately looking for the positives in life and things you appreciate. You could even make a habit of writing down three things you’re grateful for at the end of each day.

*Sent by Drs Virmani and Bedi’s patient participation group*