

# Relaxation strategies

## Acupuncture

Acupuncture involves putting thin needles into the body at various angles and depths. The idea is to stimulate certain points on the body to relieve symptoms in other parts of the body. For example, a needle inserted at a certain spot on the leg targets stomach pain. The feeling you get from acupuncture is a buzzing, tingling feeling. Once inserted, needles are usually left in place for about 15 minutes, depending on the condition that is being treated.

Acupuncture should be performed by a licensed acupuncturist using sterile or disposable needles. Acupuncture is not recommended for people with serious blood clotting conditions.

## Biofeedback

Biofeedback is a way for people to become more aware of how their bodies react to stress. Electrodes are placed on the skin to measure

- Muscle tension
- Temperature
- Heartbeat
- Sweating

With the help of a licensed biofeedback technician, people can learn how to influence these measurements. Heart rates, for example, can sometimes be lowered by releasing tension throughout the body.

## Counselling and Social Support

Feeling worried or depressed can sometimes bring on physical symptoms. These feelings are common and should be discussed with your medical team or someone who can provide social support. One option is to take part in therapy with a counsellor to help deal with these feelings. Another is to look for a support group where people with the same condition meet. Sometimes just talking with another person can help to relieve some of the tension.

## Deep breathing

Breathe deeply and slowly through the mouth. Concentrate on the sounds of breathing in and breathing out. Open a window and let in fresh air.

## **Distraction**

Watching a TV program, listening to music, and taking part in a conversation with family or friends are some ways to forget about how you are feeling.

## **Herbal remedies**

Ginger and peppermint tea are thought to make the stomach feel more settled. The effects of herbal remedies have not always been well studied, so it is good to check with a healthcare professional before taking them.

## **Hypnosis**

Hypnosis is a sleep-like state that leaves a person more open to suggestion. While the person is in a hypnotic state, hypnotherapists suggest that negative, distressing feeling has been taken over by another, positive feeling. A healthcare provider may be able to suggest someone trained in hypnosis, likely a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

## **Imagery**

Imagery is like a deliberate daydream that can reduce stress and calm the body. Imagine a scene that is relaxing, such as a quiet beach with waves lapping rhythmically on the shore. Relaxing the body before using imagery may help focus the mind on calm, soothing images. Healthcare teams may be able to suggest someone who is skilled in imagery to help.

## **Massage**

The act of touching and being touched can be healing for some people. With a bare hand, muscles can be stroked, brushed, or rubbed in a circular motion. Lotion may be used to reduce friction on the skin. Massage relaxes muscles and encourages blood flow in the area that is being touched. Massage is often a very pleasant experience. However, massage is not recommended when skin is swollen, red, or raw.

## **Progressive muscle relaxation**

This is a technique in which muscles are tightened and relaxed throughout the body. One way to do this is to start at the feet, contract and relax those muscles, and then slowly work up the body to your head. A variation on this technique is to breathe in deeply, squeeze a group of muscles, and then hold both the breath and the squeeze for a couple of seconds. Then, let go of the breath and let the body go limp.