

# 9 EASY WAYS TO STRESS LESS



Stress is bad for your overall well-being, including your cholesterol, but small changes to your everyday routine can help reduce stress. From aromatherapy to chewing gum (really!) to walking, here are 9 speedy tension-relievers.



## **Try a Little Aromatherapy**

Stress getting to you? If yes, it's time to stop and smell the roses. They contain linalool, a chemical that helps reduce stress. So do herbs, such as lavender and basil, and fruit, such as oranges, grapes, and mangoes. That's another good excuse to keep nearby a bouquet of flowers or dried lavender, or a bowl of fruit. They smell lovely and can benefit your cholesterol

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## Chew Gum

Chewing gum is a great stress-buster and little treat that won't hurt your cholesterol. According to [a large study](#), workers who chew gum report less stress than their gum-free colleagues. That's because chomping on a stick of Wrigley's stimulates the vagus nerve, which helps induce relaxation. Just make sure your gum is sugar-free.



## Sip a Cup of Tea

The British have the right idea when they brew a pot of tea in stressful times. Turns out, black tea is rich in stress-busting antioxidants, including polyphenols, flavonoids, and amino acids. There's also some evidence that green tea can help lower harmful LDL cholesterol. Have a cup!

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## **Laugh Away Stress**

When it comes to stress, laughter really is good medicine. A good belly laugh triggers production of endorphins, the brain's feel-good neurotransmitters. It also relaxes your blood vessels and increases blood flow -- the ideal antidote to tension.)



## **Take a Walk**

If stress is a constant companion, add a 20- to 30-minute walk to your daily routine. Walking and other forms of exercise help reduce anxiety. Even better, take your stroll in a neighborhood park. A recent Japanese study revealed that walking outside, especially in a forest setting, is an effective way to combat chronic stress

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## Spend Time with Fido

Whether you live with a dog, a cat, or even a bird, stress reduction is one of the great benefits of an animal companion. In one study, just watching 10 minutes of cute animal films was enough to lower volunteers' heart rates and blood pressure when they were stressed. Other research has linked pet ownership with significantly lower triglyceride and cholesterol levels



## Find a Room with a View

Next time you're overwhelmed, turn off the computer screen and look out the window instead. [One study](#) revealed that students sitting at window seats recovered faster from performing a series of stressful tasks than classmates who faced a blank wall or even a high-definition plasma screen displaying a nature scene. The more time they spent gazing at the view, the faster their heart rates dropped back to normal. Hmmmm . . . that's a good excuse to ask your boss for an office with a window.

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## Listen to Relaxing Music

As you load your personal soundtrack onto your iPod, include a medley of relaxing music to take the edge off stress. Listening to mellow tunes with a slow, steady rhythm helps slow down your breathing and heart rate so you feel calmer. Whether you're a fan of Enya or Gregorian chant, you can find something that suits your style



## Eat Happy Meals

A smart diet is as important for managing stress as it is to keeping cholesterol in check. Be sure to include foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which may help boost your mood (along with “good” HDL cholesterol), and [magnesium](#), a mineral that may help soothe an overactive stress-response system. Bonus: Many cholesterol-lowering foods, including spinach, oats, beans, and nuts, are great sources of magnesium, too.