

17 Strategies for Coping with Stress in 30 Minutes or Less

1–5: Five minutes or less

6–12: Ten-minute tricks

13–17: Long-term strategies

Take a closer look behind the stress

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How we vet brands and products

Stretching, using essential oils, scanning your body for muscular tension, and foam rolling are just a few of the many ways to relieve stress quickly. Working with a healthcare professional if these strategies don't work is highly advised.

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17 ways to get your cortisol levels down

Stress is a sneaky thing. It can curl up inside you and grow like a Chia Pet until all the sprouts have grown out of control. Sometimes stress can manifest into physical symptoms, like temporary hives, one-day headaches, or long-term weight gain.

One simple way to deal is to let your body and mind reset. Take a nap — yep, even 10 minutes of napping can help. If you were sleepy in the first place, the lack of sleep can make it harder to manage stress.

Super quick de-stressing tips

Force a laugh or smile — even anticipating a laugh can boost your mood.

Make sure you're not slouching, as posture can affect mood.

Mute all your phone notifications.

Give someone a hug.

Play a happy song, or a song that makes you happy.

Was this helpful?

But when the stress boilover happens during work, at a party, or in public, dropping everything to take a nap is definitely not a good look. And in these situations, stress can also join teams with anxiety, leaving you figuring out how to rein in both emotions.

Fortunately, there are tips and tricks that can help you get your cortisol levels down. If you need quick tips to keep your heart beating at a more manageable rate, read our ways to calm stress in five minutes or less.

If you're noticing a bigger pattern, you might want to take a longer breather with our 30-minute tips or speak to a professional to get to the root of the problem.

Ways to calm stress in 5 minutes or less

1. Acknowledge your stress

Acknowledging your stress can really help lift the weight off your shoulders and could be the first step to asking for help.

Facing stress is an opportunity to reset your mind and take it as a chance to grow. Researchers say the brain is rewiring and trying to learn from the experience so you can handle it differently next time.

So, think about whether the stress is a buildup or related to a more long-term issue. If it's unrelated to anything, maybe it's a sign your mind and body need a break.

If it's tied to a more long-term problem you can't immediately solve, try another one of the quick relaxer tips below.

2. Chew gum

Chewing is a great form of stress reduction. If you have gum on hand, particularly scented gum, chew it for at least three minutes. One study of 101 adults found that people who chewed gum during work had a lower stress response.

But don't chew half-heartedly! It may be useful to take out your pent-up energy on the gum. Another study found that vigorous chewing was required in order to achieve stress relief.

3. Drink stress-reducing tea

There are several supplements that can help reduce stress and anxiety, but many of these supplements may take a few weeks or months of intake before they have an effect.

However, the act of stepping away for a few minutes to make tea can be therapeutic. So why not also make a stress-relieving drink? Studies show that 1 gram of apple cider vinegar [Trusted Source](#) may take over 95 minutes to work its magic, while matcha may take up to an hour to work [Trusted Source](#).

Although tea takes at least an hour to take effect, just stepping away can signal to your body to relax. Plus, once you get back to your desk, time may fly faster than you know it.

4. Inhale essential oils or invest in a diffuser

Inhaling essential oils may help calm the mind [Trusted Source](#) in times of stress, anxiety, and insomnia. This popular technique, also known as aromatherapy, focuses on using scents to holistically balance your physical, emotional, and psychological health.

Popular essential oils for combating stress include:

lavender

rose

vetiver

bergamot

Roman chamomile

frankincense

sandalwood

ylang ylang

orange blossom

Choose scents based on your personal preferences. For example, if the smell of peppermint reminds you of holidays at home, use peppermint.

To use essential oils for stress, apply three drops [Trusted Source](#) onto a cotton pad and breathe it in deeply 10 times. You can also purchase a diffuser for your room or desk so that it constantly releases a calming scent.

5. Stretch at your desk

It's incredibly important to take breaks during work, even when you feel like there's a rush to get your task at hand done. For the times when you can't leave your desk, you can still stretch while sitting for five minutes without intervention.

Stretching can also help with discomfort and work-related pain or injuries [Trusted Source](#). The simplest stretch you can do is the upper body and arm stretch. To do this:

Clasp your hands together and push upward with your palms facing the sky.

Stretch and hold the pose for 10 seconds.

Try twisting your torso left and right for 30 seconds, then repeat.

For a full-body stretch, check out our desk-stretch routine.

Bonus tips for stress

Keep a stress ball at your desk. Sometimes all you need to do is physically exert all the pent-up energy.

Have a tactile item for comfort. This can be a crystal or a piece of velvet.

Buy a massage pad for your chair. This \$45 purchase is the most affordable, worth-it purchase for momentary relaxation. Sometimes stress can be a result of back strain or pain. Or your tensed muscles might be increasing your stress. A back massager with heated functionality will help you relax even more.

Was this helpful?

Ways to calm stress in 10 minutes

6. Go for a walk

Exercise or walking is a great way to manage stress. First, it lets you escape the situation. Second, exercise helps your body release endorphins, the neurotransmitters that make you feel warm and fuzzy.

Think of walking as moving meditation. A few laps around the block can help you forget previous tension and relax so you return to the situation calmer and more collected.

7. Memorize this yoga routine

Yoga isn't only a popular exercise for all ages, but it's also gaining traction for decreasing stress, anxiety, and depression. According to research^{Trusted Source}, yoga interrupts stress by producing an effect that's opposite to your flight-or-fight response.

A simple routine can help lower your cortisol levels, blood pressure, and heart rate. One of our favorite 10-minute routines is by Tara Stiles. This routine starts off with a lot of relaxing swaying.

8. Intervene with mindfulness-based, stress-reduction techniques

Sometimes stress can cause your mind to spiral and lead you down an unnecessary rabbit hole of negative thoughts. One way of escaping that spiral is to anchor yourself to the present and focus on immediate results you can achieve.

Methods to try

Close your eyes and scan your body. Pay attention to the physical feelings.

Sit and meditate by paying attention to your breathing, sounds, sensations, and emotions. Let them pass through you.

Change up your movement by taking a walk or standing up.

Give full attention to small daily activities, like drinking water, eating, or brushing your teeth.

Was this helpful?

Online meditation options

Read our review of the best online meditation options to find the right fit for you.

Was this helpful?

9. Write it out

Writing out what you're stressed about can help you focus your thoughts on the positive or ways to tackle the negative.

Write away the stress

Try the “so what?” exercise by asking yourself that question until it reveals something about yourself.

See if there are any exceptions to your concerns.

Keep a journal to track your changes and learnings.

Was this helpful?

Treat this method of writing it out as a way of taking notes without derailing your whole workday. Keep these notes on hand to check for patterns to see if there's a deeper reason behind your stress.

10. Try 4-7-8 breathing

The 4-7-8 breathing method is a powerful trick that gives your body an extra boost of oxygen. Deep breathing is an effective way to reduce anxiety, stress, and depression.

To do this: Place the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth and keep it there the whole time.

One cycle of 4-7-8 breathing

Part your lips slightly and exhale with a whooshing sound through your mouth.

Close your lips and inhale silently through your nose. Count to 4 in your head.

Hold your breath for 7 seconds.

Exhale (with a whoosh sound) for 8 seconds.

Practice this mindlessly to let your brain relax.

Complete this cycle for four full breaths.

Was this helpful?

11. Try the emotional freedom technique (EFT)

Tapping or psychological acupressure is a specific methodic sequence that involves tapping specific meridian points (areas of the body energy flows through, according to Traditional Chinese Medicine) and reciting setup phrases that will help you acknowledge issues and accept yourself.

EFT in 5 steps

Identify what's causing you stress.

On a scale of 0 to 10, write down how intense the issue is (10 being the highest).

Create a setup phrase that addresses your problem. For example: "Even though I'm stressed about this deadline, I deeply and completely accept myself."

Tap on the nine meridian points (eyebrow, side of eyes, under eyes, under nose, chin, start of collarbone, and under arm) seven times. Repeat the phrase with each tapping point. Do this sequence two to three times.

Rate your final intensity to see if your stress level has gone down to 0. If not, repeat.

Was this helpful?

12. Talk in third person

Whether it's to yourself or with a friend, talking can help temper down your stress level. Yep, talking to yourself or about yourself in third person is a form of exerting self-control over negative emotions.

According to researchers, "Referring to yourself in the third person leads people to think about themselves more similar to how they think about others."

Doing this can help you distance yourself from the experience or situation. The best part, though? It requires less effort.

Ways to calm stress in 30 minutes

13. Exercise, but make it daily

We mentioned walking earlier, but that was just a quick break. Routine exercise can help improve the way your body uses oxygen and helps you cope with stressful situations. The benefits of working out build up over time. You may be able to feel the difference as you stick to your routine.

It's recommended to exercise for at least 30 minutes five days a week.

14. Take a hot bath

The answer to washing away a day of stress may be in your bathroom. Hot water is known to help release endorphins and increase blood flow to the skin. Warm baths can also:

improve breathing

reduce risk of heart attack

lower blood pressure

burn calories

For folks living with chronic pain, hot baths can also help keep muscles loose and reduce flare-ups.

15. Clean your room, desk, or dishes

Besides removing clutter and giving you relief from a crowded space, cleaning is an effective mindfulness practice. One study found that students who washed dishes had greater states of mindfulness and positive moods.

If you don't have time to clean thoroughly, take this opportunity to organize items or tackle one cleaning task at a time. For example, if you have a load of laundry, use each washing and drying load to time your breaks.

16. Talk it out or reach out to friends

Social support is an extremely effective way to relieve stress. Ask a friend or co-worker to be a sounding board as you talk out your issues.

Sometimes the case with stressful situations is that you're trying to find a problem or a connection when there isn't one. An outsider's perspective may help you see that more clearly.

If you do reach out to a friend, be sure to express your thanks and return the favor when they ask!

17. Foam roll out the tension

Sometimes stress becomes physical: It can cause your muscles to knot up. These knots can develop in very specific places that build up over time, which you can't easily unwind via exercise or self-massage. That's where foam rolling steps in.

Foam rolling adds pressure to those trigger points, signaling your body to increase blood flow to that area and for your muscle to relax. A full-body routine can help promote relaxation the way getting a massage will. Try eight moves here.

Take a closer look at your stress

Invisible stress is real, and it can build up into chronic stress. Sometimes we don't notice it because it's been there the whole time, like a freckle or mole. However, changing freckles or moles are something you want to take the time to check out, right? Stress is the same.

If you notice a change in your patience or find yourself more easily triggered by slight noises or simple mistakes, consider whether you need to take a break and calm your mind, or if there's something bigger at play. Chronic stress can increase your risk for other mental health concerns, such as depression and anxiety.

If these strategies aren't giving you tools to cope, try seeking help from a professional.

Mindful Moves: Yoga for Anxiety

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Was this article helpful?

Yes

No

10 Easy Ways to Manage and Relieve Stress

Tips to manage stressful situations

Listen to music

Call a friend

Self-talk

Diet

Laugh

Tea

Mindfulness

Exercise

Sleep

Breathe better

Takeaway

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Tips to manage stressful situations

It might surprise you to learn that biological stress is a fairly recent discovery. It wasn't until the late 1950s that endocrinologist Hans Selye first identified and documented stress.

Symptoms of stress existed long before Selye, but his discoveries led to new research that has helped millions cope with stress. We've compiled a list of the top 10 ways to relieve stress.

Listen to music

If you're feeling overwhelmed by a stressful situation, try taking a break and listening to relaxing music. Playing calm music has a positive effect on the brain and body, can lower blood pressure, and reduce cortisol, a hormone linked to stress.

We recommend cello master Yo-Yo Ma playing Bach, but if classical really isn't your thing, try listening to ocean or nature sounds. It may sound cheesy, but they have similar relaxing effects to music.

Talk it out with a friend

When you're feeling stressed, take a break to call a friend and talk about your problems. Good relationships with friends and loved ones are important to any healthy lifestyle.

They're especially important when you're under a lot of stress. A reassuring voice, even for a minute, can put everything in perspective.

Talk yourself through it

Sometimes calling a friend is not an option. If this is the case, talking calmly to yourself can be the next best thing.

Don't worry about seeming crazy — just tell yourself why you're stressed out, what you have to do to complete the task at hand, and most importantly, that everything will be okay.

Eat right

Stress levels and a proper diet are closely related. When we're overwhelmed, we often forget to eat well and resort to using sugary, fatty snack foods as a pick-me-up.

Try to avoid sugary snacks and plan ahead. Fruits and vegetables are always good, and fish with high levels of omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to reduce the symptoms of stress. A tuna sandwich really is brain food.

Laugh it off

Laughter releases endorphins that improve mood and decrease levels of the stress-causing hormones cortisol and adrenaline. Laughing tricks your nervous system into making you happy.

Our suggestion: watch some classic Monty Python skits like "The Ministry of Silly Walks." Those Brits are so hilarious, you'll soon be cracking up, rather than cracking up.

Drink tea

A large dose of caffeine causes a short-term spike in blood pressure. It may also cause your hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis to go into overdrive.

Instead of coffee or energy drinks, try green tea. It has less than half the caffeine of coffee and contains healthy antioxidants, as well as theanine, an amino acid that has a calming effect on the nervous system.

Be mindful

Most of the tips we've suggested provide immediate relief, but there are also many lifestyle changes that can be more effective in the long run. The concept of "mindfulness" is a large part of meditative and somatic approaches to mental health and has become popular recently.

From yoga and tai chi to meditation and Pilates, these systems of mindfulness incorporate physical and mental exercises that prevent stress from becoming a problem. Try joining a class.

Online meditation options

Read our review of the best online meditation options to find the right fit for you.

Was this helpful?

Exercise (even for a minute)

Exercise doesn't necessarily mean power lifting at the gym or training for a marathon. A short walk around the office or simply standing up to stretch during a break at work can offer immediate relief in a stressful situation.

Getting your blood moving releases endorphins and can improve your mood almost instantaneously.

Sleep better

Everyone knows stress can cause you to lose sleep. Unfortunately, lack of sleep is also a key cause of stress. This vicious cycle causes the brain and body to get out of whack and only gets worse with time.

Make sure to get the doctor-recommended seven to eight hours of sleep. Turn the TV off earlier, dim the lights, and give yourself time to relax before going to bed. It may be the most effective stress buster on our list.

Breathe easy

The advice “take a deep breath” may seem like a cliché, but it holds true when it comes to stress. For centuries, Buddhist monks have been conscious of deliberate breathing during meditation.

For an easy three- to five-minute exercise, sit up in your chair with your feet flat on the floor and hands on top of your knees. Breathe in and out slowly and deeply, concentrating on your lungs as they expand fully in your chest.

While shallow breathing causes stress, deep breathing oxygenates your blood, helps center your body, and clears your mind.

Learn more about stress relief

Stress is an unavoidable part of life, but that doesn’t mean you should ignore it. Too much untreated stress can cause potentially serious physical and mental health problems.

The good news is that in many cases, stress is manageable. With some patience and a few useful strategies, you can reduce your stress, whether it’s family stress or stress at the workplace.

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Was this article helpful?

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Psychological Stress

Overview

Good and bad

Health impacts

Signs

Self-care

Finding a therapist

Overview

Stress. It's a six-letter word that many of us dread. Whether it's a tense interaction with a boss or pressure from friends and family, we all face stressful situations from time to time.

For some of us, these events happen sporadically. For others, daily stress is a regular part of life.

Psychological stress definition

There's a good chance we can all identify negative stress, but did you know that stress can also be positive?

Good stress, called eustress, can actually be beneficial to you. Unlike bad stress, or distress, good stress can help with motivation, focus, energy, and performance. For some people, it can also feel exciting.

On the other hand, bad stress typically causes anxiety, concern, and a decrease in performance. It also feels uncomfortable, and it can lead to more serious issues if not addressed.

Psychological stress effects

It's no secret that the long-term effects of distress can damage our health [Trusted Source](#).

Stress has the ability to negatively impact our lives. It can cause physical conditions, such as headaches, digestive issues, and sleep disturbances. It can also cause psychological and emotional strains, including confusion, anxiety, and depression.

According to the American Psychological Association, untreated chronic stress, or stress that's constant and lasts over an extended period of time, can result in high blood pressure or a weakened immune system.

It can also contribute to the development of obesity [Trusted Source](#) and heart disease [Trusted Source](#).

Psychological stress signs

There's a distinction between a stressor and actual stress. A stressor can be a person, place, or situation that's causing you stress. Stress is the actual response to one or a combination of those stressors.

There are any number of situations that can cause stress. Dr. Gary Brown, a licensed psychotherapist, says some of the more common stressors include:

relationship conflicts at home

new or increasing work responsibilities

increasing demands

financial strain

loss of a loved one

health problems

moving to a new location

exposure to one or more traumatic incidents, such as a car accident or a violent crime

Knowing how to spot the signs of stress is the first step in developing ways to manage its adverse effects.

Some of the more common physical, psychological, and emotional signs of chronic stress include:

rapid heart rate

elevated blood pressure

feeling overwhelmed

fatigue

difficulty sleeping

poor problem-solving

fear that the stressor won't go away

persistent thoughts about one or more stressors

changes in behavior, including social withdrawal, feelings of sadness, frustration, loss of emotional control, inability to rest, and self-medication

Ways to manage stress

When it comes to managing stress, making simple changes can go a long way in improving your overall health and reducing stress. Having tools and strategies you can turn to in stressful situations can prevent your stress levels from escalating.

Find a balance

It's important to structure some of your time so that you can be comfortably busy without being overwhelmed, Brown says. "Working hard does not usually equate with working efficiently," he said. In fact, working too much can reduce productivity.

Be kind to yourself

Understanding that you aren't weak because you're feeling stress is important, Brown says. Stress is a very normal reaction to the stressors in your life.

Lean on the people you trust

Before your stress levels escalate, reach out to someone you trust, such as a friend, family member, or coworker. Sharing your feelings or venting your concerns may help to reduce your stress.

Keep a journal

Set aside time to reflect on your day. Write down any thoughts or feelings you're having. This can be a useful tool to help you better understand your stressors and how you react to stress, Brown says.

Eat well-balanced, regular meals

When it comes to managing stress, proper nutrition is your friend. Skipping meals can lower your blood sugar, which can depress your mood. In some cases, this can also trigger intense feelings of anger and frustration, Brown says.

Exercise regularly

Engaging in regular physical activity can improve your overall health and reduce your stress levels. When you exercise, your body releases endorphins. These feel-good hormones can also ease symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Get plenty of rest

Your ability to manage stress decreases when you're tired. Try to get a recommended seven to nine hours each night. If you have insomnia, aim to get as much sleep as you can, then build in periods of rest during the day.

Practice relaxation exercises

These exercises, which can include deep, slow breathing and progressive muscle relaxation, involve tensing and then relaxing various groups of muscles.

Try to carve out three minutes, three times a day to practice these exercises, says Dr. Russell Morfitt, a psychologist.

Schedule your worry

While it may feel awkward at first, consider scheduling the worry to specific parts of the day, Morfitt says. “When we lean into our fears by deliberately seeking out our stressors and not avoiding them or escaping them, they often lose their power,” he said.

Working with a professional

A therapist or mental health professional can also help you find ways to manage your stress.

Consider working with a mental health professional if your stress is chronic or accompanied by daily headaches, tight jaw, fibromyalgia, or constant fatigue, says Dr. David J. Puder of Loma Linda University Behavioral Medicine Center.

You should also see a mental health professional if you have feelings of depression, suicidal thoughts, and panic attacks.

When looking for a mental health professional, ask friends or family members for referrals. After your first session, Puder says to reflect on the following questions:

Will you trust the therapist?

Do you feel heard and understood?

Do you feel comfortable to speak up if you disagree with them?

Can you see that they care about you as an individual?

Answering these questions can help you determine if this person is right for you.

Effective therapy sessions can happen in person, over the phone, and even online. To help find a therapist that's right for you, check out these five affordable therapy options.

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Was this article helpful?

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Can Antihistamines Treat Stress-Induced Rashes?

Do they work?

Best options

Side effects

Precautions

Takeaway

Stress triggers histamine release, which can cause itching, redness, and hives in some people. Can over-the-counter (OTC) antihistamines provide relief?

Histamine is a key chemical involved in inflammation, allergic reactions, and regulating the body's stress response.

When stress occurs, the body releases histamine, which can manifest in mental health symptoms such as anxiety or in physical reactions such as heart palpitations or skin issues. Some individuals are more sensitive to histamine's effects on the skin, which can lead to itching, redness, and hives.

Because these symptoms are linked to histamine release, can antihistamines like Benadryl relieve them? Let's take a look at what the research says.

Can antihistamines help with stress rashes?

Antihistamines can sometimes help with stress-induced rashes, but their success varies from person to person.

Some research^{Trusted Source} suggests that antihistamines can alleviate itching and rash symptoms exacerbated by stress by blocking histamine receptors in your body.

A case report^{Trusted Source} involving a 42-year-old woman with severe stress-related itching and rash indicated that antihistamine treatment didn't provide any relief. Rather, when she started taking anxiolytic therapy (like benzodiazepines) as an anxiety treatment, her itching went away within a day.

This suggests that for some people, medications aimed at reducing anxiety may be more effective for stress-related rashes by directly addressing the underlying stress.

How do antihistamines treat stress rashes?

Antihistamines, such as Benadryl, Claritin, or Zyrtec, block histamine receptors, preventing histamine from binding and triggering the inflammatory response. By reducing histamine activity, antihistamines can alleviate itching, redness, skin discoloration, and swelling associated with stress-related rashes, providing relief from these symptoms.

What is happening when a stress rash doesn't respond to antihistamines?

Antihistamines may not always work effectively for stress-related rashes because of a few reasons:

Nonhistamine mechanisms: Although histamine plays a significant role, stress can trigger other pathways^{Trusted Source} that contribute to skin reactions, such as cytokines and neuropeptides. Antihistamines specifically target histamine receptors, so they may not address these other mechanisms.

Individual variability: People vary in how their bodies respond to stress and how sensitive they are to histamine. Some individuals may have a stronger immune response or other factors contributing to their skin reactions that antihistamines alone may not fully alleviate.

Which antihistamine is best for stress rashes?

There isn't a specific antihistamine that's universally considered the best for treating stress-related rashes because individual responses can vary. But some commonly used antihistamines for itching and rash symptoms, including those exacerbated by stress, include:

Cetirizine: Cetirizine (Zyrtec) is known for its effectiveness in reducing itching and hives caused by allergic reactions.

Loratadine: Loratadine (Claritin) is another popular choice that's nonsedating and generally well tolerated.

Diphenhydramine: Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) provides quick relief but can cause drowsiness, making it more suitable for nighttime use. Benadryl cream is also available for topical relief of itching and irritation.

Fexofenadine: Fexofenadine (Allegra) is nonsedating and effective for relieving itching and allergic reactions.

For severe reactions, doctors may prescribe stronger antihistamines like hydroxyzine (Atarax, Vistaril), which is used for its sedative and anti-anxiety properties in addition to its antihistamine effects.

Side effects of antihistamines

Here are common side effects related to antihistamines:

drowsiness (especially with older antihistamines like diphenhydramine)

dry mouth

blurred vision

constipation

difficulty urinating

dizziness

headache

nausea

nervousness or agitation (less common with nonsedating antihistamines)

confusion (especially in older individuals)

Who should not use antihistamines for stress rash treatment?

Antihistamines for stress rash treatment may not be suitable for everyone, particularly:

Children: Some antihistamines may not be recommended for children under a certain age without medical supervision. Talk with a pediatrician for their recommendations.

Older individuals: They may be more prone to side effects such as confusion or dizziness.

People with certain medical conditions: These conditions include glaucoma, prostate enlargement, urinary retention, severe liver disease, and certain heart conditions.

Those who are pregnant or nursing: Antihistamines can potentially affect the developing fetus or pass into breast milk, so their use should be discussed with a healthcare professional.

Other treatments for stress rashes

topical creams (hydrocortisone, calamine lotion)

moisturizers

corticosteroids

cool compress

benzodiazepines

cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)

stress management techniques

Was this helpful?

Takeaway

Stress can occasionally cause redness, skin discoloration, itching, and hives due to histamine release. Antihistamines like Benadryl or Zyrtec may help alleviate symptoms by blocking histamine's effects.

If you have a stress rash, consider an over-the-counter (OTC) antihistamine and try reducing stress with relaxation techniques. Consult a healthcare professional if the rash is severe or if OTC remedies don't provide relief.