



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Brittany Freeman, Wellness Coordinator

Cardiovascular Disease in Women

May is recognized as National Women's Health Month, likely because Mother's Day is May 10th, so this is a great opportunity to discuss life-saving information on one of the many differences between men and women: symptoms of a heart attack. Symptoms can be the same for men and women, but many women experience symptoms that are not often associated with a heart attack. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among women, resulting in 1 in 3 deaths per year, so knowing how to recognize symptoms can save the lives of those we love (The Facts about Women and Heart Disease, n.d.).

Many women are not aware of the risk factors they have for cardiovascular disease or that it is the leading cause of death among them. Women have risk factors that men do not. For example, pregnancy and menopause increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. According to the American Heart Association, 45% of women, 20 years old and above, have cardiovascular disease, and more than 50% get pregnant without good heart health (The Facts about Women and Heart Disease, n.d.). In addition to the following list, women are more likely to have more than one symptom, and they often

report feeling unusual before without knowing why (Symptoms of a Heart Attack in Women, n.d.). American Heart Association's Go Red for Women was established to increase awareness for these symptoms, often unique to women, and the high incidence of heart attacks in women.



Picture Description: A pink background with "Go Red" in red font and "for women" in black font with the Go Red for Women red dress logo on the left.



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Signs & Symptoms

Symptom	Typical for Men	Typical for Women
Chest Pain/Discomfort	Intense pressure (most common symptom)	Squeezing/fullness or no chest pressure (most common symptom)
Shortness of Breath	Common and often accompanied with chest pain	Very common and could be felt days prior to a heart attack... can be felt while resting & without chest pain
Fatigue	Not common	Very common; may be felt days prior
Dizziness	Common	More likely to occur in women; often with fainting
Upper Body Pain	Left arm and/or jaw	Often in back, neck, jaw or right arm
Cold Sweats	Common	Frequent
Indigestion/Stomach Discomfort	Possible, could feel like heartburn	More frequent; severe abdominal pressure or upset stomach, including vomiting and nausea
If you suspect a heart attack, call 911 immediately without delay!	A silent heart attack: one that is difficult to recognize due to symptoms not typically associated with a heart attack. These symptoms are common in women, including indigestion, flu-like symptoms, feeling as if a chest or upper back muscle was strained and discomfort in the jaw, upper back or arms.	

Risk Factors Unique to Women

Entering pregnancy without good cardiovascular health increases the risk high blood pressure, gestational diabetes and preeclampsia. Preeclampsia is a blood pressure disorder that develops after 20 weeks of pregnancy, usually resulting in high blood pressure, high protein in the urine and maybe organ dysfunction. Health issues like these affect 10-20% of pregnant women and having one of these issues increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team



Photo Description: Silhouettes of two women jumping over what appears to be the ocean with a sunset in the background.

diabetes after pregnancy. One-third of maternal deaths and the number one cause of death among new mothers is cardiovascular disease (Risk Factors and Pregnancy, n.d.).

During menopause women are typically at increased risk for cardiovascular disease simply due to the age it occurs and the changes many women experience during. Women who experience menopause before 45 years old have a much higher risk for developing cardiovascular disease.

Reasons for increased risk

during menopause are associated with decreased estrogen (helps relax and open blood vessels), hot flashes & night sweats, depression, sleep issues and increased visceral fat. It is important to incorporate or maintain a healthy lifestyle and monitor blood pressure during menopause and better to establish lifestyle habits prior (Menopause and Cardiovascular Risk, n.d.). Known as the “silent killer,” high blood pressure will often occur without noticeable symptoms. More deaths from high blood pressure occur in women, at 51.6%, than men with the highest amount occurring in Black women. Additionally, about 57.5% of deaths from stroke occur in women.

In addition to experiencing symptoms not often associated with heart attacks and seemingly mild stroke symptoms, many women, and anyone who happens to be with them, do not recognize they need help until it is too late. To increase risk for death more, many women do not receive CPR and AED application because bystanders are worried about getting in trouble for inappropriate exposure, touching or hurting women. It is important to emphasize **the Good Samaritan Act of Florida Statutes** protects anyone who provides emergency care or treatment in good faith, saying they shall not be held liable for any civil damages resulting from care or treatment (The 2025 Florida Statutes, 2025).



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Despite increased risk to experience death from cardiovascular disease among women, less research for the disease is performed with women. Among cardiovascular clinical trials, 38% of the participants are women. Hopefully research in women is trending upward as these variables, unique to women, gain more attention (The Facts about Women and Heart Disease, n.d.).

Risk Factors:

- Overweight or Obese: Being overweight or obese increases the risk for cardiovascular disease. Also to note, research has linked obesity with pregnancy related deaths, so achieving a healthy weight before pregnancy is recommended.
- High Blood Pressure
- Smoking ([vaping, nicotine and smokeless tobacco can increase risk also](#))
- High Blood Cholesterol
- Physical Inactivity
- Diabetes

Unpreventable Risks: Age, Gender, Family History, Race &/or History of a heart attack or stroke

- Knowledge of any unpreventable risks can encourage action. Blood pressure and excess weight can be decreased despite these unpreventable risks.

How to Decrease or Manage Risk Factors

For mothers who have difficulty justifying time to exercise, exercise to encourage increased physical activity for your children! The American Heart Association recommends that children need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, at minimum! Lead by example to decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity, high blood pressure, low HDL (good cholesterol) and diabetes for you and your child(ren) (Children and Physical Activity, n.d.). Little bouts of habitual physical activity can help a lot, like:

- Taking dance breaks between chores (freestyle or videos)
- Family push-up, wall squat hold and/or plank hold challenges every day or two
- Outdoor walks...if walking your toddler/kids' pace is not enough cardio, let them ride a bike or skip (increasing intensity with higher knees and short but quicker steps) beside them
- Assign exercises to each suit of a deck of cards, get in a circle around them, and perform the reps of each card flipped, letting your kid(s), or the first one done with reps, flip the card
- Let your kid(s) work-out, or try to work-out, with you, and hold them (switching arms), if needed.



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Healthy Habits to Give Your Diet a Makeover

For healthy eating, make healthy changes that can be maintained forever instead of drastic changes that cannot be maintained for life, or would be miserable to do so.

- Add before removing, like increased water intake and more vegetables
- Eat more fiber, making fiber from vegetables the primary source
- Eat more whole foods and less processed foods
- Eat vegetables at the beginning of meals to increase fullness, ensure you prioritize eating them and potentially decrease blood glucose and insulin spikes (Imai, et al., 2023).
- Limit sugar intake
- Decrease or avoid high calorie and sweetened beverages
- Limit or avoid alcohol consumption
- If using tobacco products or vaping, join a cessation program to stop

To summarize, recognizing health differences between men and women can save lives! Most women are well acquainted with pain and discomfort, making signs and symptoms of a heart attack or stroke difficult to notice. So, knowing the risk factors and recognizing when something does not feel right are key take aways. Hopefully this provides awareness and encouragement to live a healthy lifestyle and potentially help, or save, the lives of loved ones.

For the mothers reading this, Happy Mother's Day!

References:

- Children and Physical Activity.* (n.d.). Retrieved from American Heart Association Go Red for Women: <https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/know-your-risk/risk-factors/children-and-physical-activity>
- Imai, S., Kajiya, S., Kitta, K., Miyawaki, T., Matsumoto, S., Ozasa, N., . . . Fukui, M. (2023, Feb 26). *Eating Vegetables First Regardless of Eating Speed Has a Significant Reducing Effect on Postprandial Blood Glucose and Insulin in Young Healthy Women: Randomized Controlled Cross-Over Study.* Retrieved from National Library of Medicine: PubMed Central: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10005673/>
- Menopause and Cardiovascular Risk.* (n.d.). Retrieved from American Heart Association Go Red for Women: <https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/know-your-risk/menopause/menopause-and-cardiovascular-risk>
- Risk Factors and Pregnancy.* (n.d.). Retrieved from American Heart Association Go Red for Women: <https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/know-your-risk/pregnancy-and-maternal-health/pregnancy-and-risk-factors>
- Symptoms of a Heart Attack in Women.* (n.d.). Retrieved from American Heart Association Go Red for Women: <https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/about-heart-disease-in-women/signs-and-symptoms-in-women/symptoms-of-a-heart-attack>
- The 2025 Florida Statutes.* (2025). Retrieved from Online Sunshine: https://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0768/Sections/0768.13.html
- The Facts about Women and Heart Disease.* (n.d.). Retrieved from American Heart Association Go Red for Women: <https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/about-heart-disease-in-women/facts>



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Elevate Your Fitness with Group Exercise!

Looking to add energy and variety to your workouts? Our **Group Exercise Classes** are designed to help you build strength, improve flexibility, and boost endurance—all in a supportive, community-driven environment.

Why Join a Class?

- ✓ **Stay Motivated** – Energizing workouts led by expert instructors
- ✓ **Build Community** – Exercise alongside fellow KSC employees
- ✓ **All Levels Welcome** – Modifications provided for every fitness level

Class Lineup

- **Buffed & Balanced:** A strength-based class using body weight and optional weights for a total-body experience.
- **Stretch:** Improve flexibility, balance, and mobility through guided poses and movements.
- **Circuit Training:** A fast-paced, high-energy workout combining **strength, endurance, and cardio.**

New to Group Fitness?

No worries! Every class is beginner-friendly, and our instructors will guide you every step of the way. **Bring a coworker or friend** and make your workouts even more fun!



Picture Description: A diverse group of four fit individuals sits on a gym floor, engaging in a post-workout high-five and sharing smiles. The industrial-style gym setting features large windows and a relaxed atmosphere



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Find Your Class!

Visit the Group Exercise Schedule to explore class times, instructor details, and descriptions. This resource is updated regularly so you never miss a workout opportunity.

Monday-Friday midday classes are available in-person and on MS Teams:

Click Here to participate in Buffed & Balanced and Stretch class through MS Teams.

Click Here for previously recorded classes.

Click Here to request the outlook calendar series.

Let's move together, get stronger, and make fitness fun! See you in class!

13th Annual NASAMoves! Challenge

The 2026 NASAMoves! Challenge is OPEN for registration!

Sign Up by clicking the link and follow the prompts: [2026 NASAMoves!](#) (Note: This link will direct you to a nongovernment website. Any information provided is subject to the vendor's privacy policies, terms of use etc.)

[Join the email distribution list to stay up to date with the latest information.](#)

NASA Moves! Important Dates:

Pre-Signup Exploration Period: April 27 – May 5, 2026 (Steps logged during this period will not count toward the challenge)

NASA Moves! Challenge: May 6 – June 2, 2026

“Launch into Motion” in the upcoming NASA Moves! 2026 Fitness Challenge, taking place from **May 6 – June 2, 2026**, brought to you by The Office of the Chief Health and Medical Officer (OCHMO) Mission: HEALTH Team!





KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Expand Your Options with Ames Research Center's Virtual Fitness

We want to highlight [Ames Fitness Center's virtual classes](#), available to all NASA employees.

They offer a variety of classes, including many that we do not offer at Kennedy Space Center, including Cardio Step, Foam Roll & Stretch, and Cardio Kickboxing.

See their schedule below for all their classes, including their level of intensity.

NASA Ames Fitness Center Class Schedule					
Fitness coaching and individual fitness assessment are available upon request. See staff at the front desk.					
Session	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning 6:00am-9:45am		Cardio Step with Marco 6:30-7:15		Cardio Step with Marco 6:30-7:15	
Fitness Center is closed from 9:45 am - 11:00 am for custodial services.					
Mid-day 11:00am-2:30pm	Cardio Blast with Marco 11:15-11:45 ■	Foam Roll & Stretch with Marco 11:15-11:45 ●	Cardio Blast with Marco 11:15-11:45 ■	Foam Roll & Stretch with Marco 11:15-11:45 ●	Cardio Blast with Marco 11:15-11:45 ■
	Tone Up with Marco 11:45-12:15 ■	CoreFit with Marco 12:00-12:30 ●	Tone Up with Marco 11:45-12:15 ■	CoreFit with Marco 12:00-12:30 ●	Tone Up with Marco 11:45-12:15 ■
	Yoga with Orion 12:15-1:00 ●	Cross Training with Marco 12:30-1:00 ◆	Yoga with Orion 12:15-1:00 ●	Cross Training with Marco 12:30-1:00 ◆	Yoga with Orion 12:15-1:00 ●
Evening 2:30pm-	Tone Up with Orion 4:15-5:00 ■	Yoga with Orion 4:15-5:00 ●	Tone Up with Orion 4:15-5:00 ■	Yoga with Orion 4:15-5:00 ●	
	Cardio Kickboxing with Orion 5:30-6:00 ■	Cross Training with Orion 5:15-6:00 ◆	Cardio Kickboxing with Orion 5:30-6:00 ■	Cross Training with Orion 5:15-6:00 ◆	
● Low Intensity ■ Moderate Intensity ◆ Vigorous Intensity					



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

The times in the schedule are Pacific Standard Time, possibly providing more options and convenience for many at Kennedy Space Center.

If you participate in any of the following classes, please complete [this survey](#). Fortunately, funding was secured for *this* year after plans were made to reduce the hours and staff at the Ames Fitness Center. Because we are not sure how long this funding will be approved, we ask for your support by attending their classes and completing the [survey](#).

The Ames Fitness Center has had a prominent impact on the health of our NASA family. Help us enable them to keep up the good work and save their fitness center!

Colin Andryc, Wellness Specialist

TRX Suspension Training

“How much do you bench bro?” ... “Yo, what’s your heavy triple on squats these days, big man?”: These are some things we hear often in a gym setting, but rarely do the ‘gym-bros’ discuss bodyweight movements, especially the use of suspension trainers, like TRX straps. Suspension trainers are the next level in progressing bodyweight movements but also very beneficial to those recovering from an injury and learning the mechanics of moving our body through space without added resistance (other than that pesky little gravity thing). In today’s article we will discuss the importance and benefit of adding suspension training to an exercise program.

Suspension training is built on the premise of **instability**. Instability is defined as:

1. the quality or state of being unstable; lack of stability or firmness.
2. the tendency to behave in an unpredictable, changeable, or erratic manner.

I find the second definition to nail the idea home. The straps or rings you would hold onto place the body in a state of instability because those straps or rings are not fixed objects, causing them to move when the user moves. A question I had for myself, “would an inverted row performed on a Smith Machine, be considered suspension training like a row performed using TRX straps?” The answer is, “no,” even though some elements are similar in nature. The bar on a Smith Machine is a fixed item on rails, so it doesn’t move side to side, rotate, or force stabilizing muscles to fire in the same way.



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

So, as we see, we use the instability for our benefit to perform exercises, stressing muscles and fascia in a manner that does not require additional resistance, while still providing a great way to work-out in the Fitness Center or at home. Now let's look at a few movements that mimic our ADL's (activities of daily living) that can be performed using suspension trainers. We will go over the squat, hinge, lunge, push, pull, and twist.



TRX Squat

1. Adjust straps to mid-length
2. Stack elbows under shoulders
3. Feet hip-width apart
4. Lower hips back and down to a squat position
5. Drive through heels, to return to standing position

TRX Hinge

1. Adjust straps to mid-length
2. Face anchor, arms straight w/ light tension
3. Push hips behind you, while leaning the torso forward and keeping the straps taut
4. Drive hips forward, squeeze glutes, and keep arms long



TRX Lunge



1. Adjust straps to mid-calf
2. Place one foot in both foot cradles
3. Drive suspended knee back, while the front leg lowers to a 90 degree bend
4. Drive through front heel to return standing
5. Repeat on the other side



KSC FITNESS CENTER

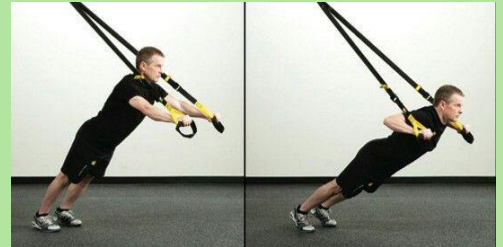
Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

TRX Push-up

1. Adjust straps so they are fully lengthened
2. Choose a moderate/deep angle w/ arms extended in front
3. Lower your body by bending elbows to 90 degrees, maintaining a plank position
4. Extend arms/elbows, returning to starting position



TRX Row

1. Fully shorten the straps
2. Choose a shallow angle, pull shoulders down and back, w/ handles positioned at the ribs
3. Lower body until arms are extended, while maintaining plank position
4. Drive elbows back & bring chest back to start

TRX Twist

1. Adjust straps to mid-length
2. Lean back w/ arms straight & body tight
3. Drive one elbow or hand back and rotate your torso toward that side
4. Lower with control & rotate back to the center using core muscles
5. Repeat on the opposite side





KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

With just these six movements, you have a great workout utilizing a suspension trainer. You can perform 2-3 sets of 15-20 reps to get a full body workout. Some additional tips I have noticed when using a suspension trainer myself, or coaching others using the device, include:

- The angle of your body is magic! A more upright position on a row will make the movement easier instead of a position where the back is closer to the ground.
- Keep the body and core tight throughout the range of motion. You wouldn't drop your hips towards the ground when doing a normal pushup, and the same principle applies to a lot of the suspension movements, keeping the body straight with core engaged.
- People tend to struggle most with the TRX push-up. Coming up onto your toes (just like a traditional pushup) is correct. People will keep their feet flat (incorrect), turning the movement into a convoluted shoulder press instead of coming onto the toes, letting the core keep the body straight, while using the chest and triceps muscles to complete the movement.

Stop by the Fitness Center and try out a routine on the suspension trainer. We have a multitude of exercises that can provide a challenge for the most seasoned gym goers or beginners.

References:

TRX Training. (n.d.). TRX Strength: Build muscle and increase total-body strength with the TRX Suspension Trainer [Instructional poster].
TRX Training. <https://www.trxtraining.com>



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Kris Schweitzer, Wellness Specialist

Don't Lose Your Senses Over Stress

Stress is everywhere. We all experience it and we all deal with it in different ways. There are countless techniques for managing stress but the most effective stress relief involves a combination of quick, immediate techniques and long-term lifestyle changes. Some lifestyle habits for long-term stress management include:

Get active

Physical activity can pump up your feel-good endorphins and other natural neural chemicals that boost your sense of well-being. Exercise can also refocus your mind on your body's movements. This can improve your mood and help the day's irritations fade away. So go on a run, take a hike, work in your garden, clean your house, bike, swim, weight train, vacuum, or do anything else that gets you moving.

Eat a healthy diet

Eating a healthy diet is an important part of taking care of yourself. Aim to eat many fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Avoid unhealthy habits

Some people may deal with stress with unhealthy habits. These may include drinking too much caffeine or alcohol, smoking, eating too much, or using illegal substances. These habits can harm your health and increase your stress levels.

Meditate

During meditation, you focus your attention and quiet the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. This can give you a sense of calm, peace, and balance that can help your emotional well-being. Meditation can empower us to enhance our overall health.

You can practice guided meditation, guided imagery, mindfulness, visualization, and other forms of meditation anywhere at any time. For example, you could meditate when you're out for a walk, riding the bus to work or waiting at your health care provider's office. Deep breathing can also be done anywhere, and apps are available to demonstrate/guide these exercises.

Laugh more

A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but it can help you feel better, even if you have to force a fake laugh through your grumpiness. When you laugh, it lightens your mental load. It also causes positive physical changes in the body. Laughter fires up and then cools down your stress response. So, read some jokes, tell some jokes, watch a comedy, hang out with your funny friends, or give laughter yoga a try.

Connect with others

When you're stressed and irritable, you may want to isolate yourself. Instead, reach out to family and friends and make social connections. Even one good friend who listens can make a difference.



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Social contact is a good stress reliever because it can offer distraction, give support, and help you put up with life's up and downs. So, take a coffee break with a friend, call a relative, or visit your place of worship. Additionally, volunteering for a charity can help yourself while helping others.

Assert yourself

You might want to do it all, but you can't, at least not without paying a price. Learning to say no or being willing to delegate can help you manage your to-do list and your stress. Healthy boundaries are important in a wellness journey, because everyone has physical and emotional limits. Saying "yes" may seem like an easy way to keep the peace, prevent conflicts, and get the job done right. But instead, it may cause you inner conflict because your needs, and those of your family, come second. Putting yourself second can lead to stress, anger, resentment, and even the wish to take revenge, and those are not very calm and peaceful reactions. Remember, you're a priority!

Try yoga

With its series of postures and breathing exercises, yoga is a popular stress reliever. Yoga brings together physical and mental disciplines that may help you reach peace of body and mind. Yoga can help you relax and ease stress and anxiety.

Try yoga on your own or find a class - you can find classes in many areas (check out KSC's Stretch Classes, incorporating some yoga moves & the virtual yoga classes at Ames Research Center, listed above). Hatha yoga, especially, is a good stress reliever because of its slower pace and easier movements.

Get enough sleep

Stress can cause you to have trouble falling asleep. When you have too much to do and too much to think about, your sleep can suffer. But sleep is the time when your brain and body recharge. Most adults need about 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.

How well and how long you sleep can affect your mood, energy level, focus, and overall functioning. If you have sleep troubles, make sure that you have a quiet, relaxing bedtime routine. For example, listen to soothing music, make sure the area you sleep in is cool, dark and quiet, put phones and tablets away, and stick to a regular schedule.

Keep a journal

Writing down your thoughts and feelings can be a good release for pent-up feelings. Don't think about what to write about, let it happen. Write anything that comes to mind. No one else needs to read it. So don't aim for perfect grammar or spelling.

Let your thoughts flow on paper, or on the computer screen. Once you're done, you can toss out what you wrote or save it to revisit later.

Get musical and be creative

Listening to or playing music is a good stress reliever. It can provide a mental distraction, lessen muscle tension, and lower stress hormones. Turn up the volume and let your mind be absorbed by the music.

If music isn't one of your interests, turn your attention to another hobby you enjoy. For example, try gardening, sewing, reading, or sketching. Or try anything that makes you focus on what you're doing rather than what you think you should be doing.



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Seek counseling

If new stressors are making it hard for you to cope or if self-care measures aren't relieving your stress, you may want to think about therapy or counseling. Therapy also may be a good idea if you feel overwhelmed or trapped. You also may think about therapy if you worry a great deal, or if you have trouble carrying out daily routines or meeting duties at work, home, or school. Professional counselors or therapists can help you find the sources of your stress and learn new coping tools.

Recognize when you're stressed.

It might seem obvious that you'd know when you're stressed, but many of us spend so much time in a frazzled state that we've forgotten what it feels like when our nervous systems are in balance - when we're calm yet still alert and focused.

If this is you, you can recognize when you're stressed by listening to your body. When you're tired, your eyes feel heavy, and you might need to rest your head on your hand. When you're happy, you laugh easily. And, when you're stressed, your body lets you know that, too. Get in the habit of paying attention to your body's cues.

Observe your muscles and insides. Are your muscles tense or sore? Is your stomach tight, cramped, or aching? Are your hands or jaw clenched?

Observe your breath. Is your breathing shallow? Place one hand on your belly, the other on your chest. Watch your hands rise and fall with each breath. Notice when you breathe fully or when you "forget" to breathe.

Identify your stress response.

Internally, we all respond the same way to the "fight-or-flight" stress response: your blood pressure rises, your heart pumps faster, and your muscles constrict. Your body works hard and drains your immune system. Externally, however, people respond to stress in different ways. The best way to quickly relieve stress often relates to your specific stress response:

- Over excited stress response: If you tend to become angry, agitated, overly emotional, or keyed up under stress, you will respond best to stress relief activities that quiet you down.
- Under excited stress response: If you tend to become depressed, withdrawn, or spaced out under stress, you will respond best to stress relief activities that are stimulating and energizing.
- Immobilization or "frozen" stress response: Do you freeze when under stress? The immobilization stress response is often associated with a past history of trauma. When faced with stressful situations, you may find yourself totally stuck and unable to act. Your challenge is to break free of your "frozen" state by rebooting your nervous system and reactivating the body's natural "fight-or-flight" stress response. Physical movement that engages both your arms and legs, such as walking, swimming, running, dancing, climbing, or tai chi, can be particularly helpful. As you move, focus on your body and the sensations you feel in your limbs rather than on your thoughts. This mindfulness element can help your nervous system become "unstuck" and able to move on.

Bring your senses to the rescue.

One of the speediest and most reliable ways to stamp out stress is to engage one or more of your senses (sight, sound, smell, taste & touch) or movement. Since everyone is different, you'll need to do some experimenting to discover which technique works best for you, but the payoff is huge. You can stay calm, productive, and focused when you know how to quickly relieve stress. To use your senses to quickly relieve stress, you first need to identify the sensory experiences that work best for you. This can require some experimentation. As you employ different senses, note how quickly your stress levels drop.



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Be as precise as possible. What is the specific kind of sound or type of movement that affects you the most? For example, if you're a music lover, listen to many different artists and types of music until you find the song that instantly lifts and relaxes you.

Sight

- Look at a cherished photo or a favorite memento.
- Use a plant or flowers to enliven your workspace.
- Enjoy the beauty of nature: a garden, the beach, a park, or your own backyard.
- Surround yourself with colors that lift your spirits.
- Close your eyes and picture a place that feels peaceful and rejuvenating.

Sound

- Sing or play a favorite tune.
- Listen to calming or uplifting music.
- Tune in to the soundtrack of nature - crashing waves, the wind rustling the trees, birds singing.
- Buy a small fountain, so you can enjoy the soothing sound of running water in your home or office.
- Hang wind chimes near an open window.
- Vocal toning: As strange as it may sound, vocal toning is a special technique that reduces the stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol. Try sneaking off to a quiet place to spend a few minutes toning before a meeting with your boss and see how much more relaxed and focused you feel. It works by exercising the tiny muscles of the inner ear that help you detect the higher frequencies of human speech that impart emotion and tell you what someone is really trying to say. Not only will you feel more relaxed in that meeting, you'll also be better able to understand what he or she is trying to communicate.

How to tone: Sit up straight and simply make “mmmm” sounds with your lips together and teeth slightly apart. Experiment by changing the pitch and volume until you experience a pleasant vibration in your face and, eventually, your heart and stomach.



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Smell

- Light a scented candle or burn some incense (Use calming scents like lavender).
- Experiment with different essential oils.
- Smell the roses or another type of flower.
- Enjoy clean, fresh air in the great outdoors.
- Spritz on your favorite perfume or cologne.

Taste

Slowly savoring a favorite treat can be very relaxing, but mindless eating will only add to your stress and your waistline. The key is to indulge your sense of taste mindfully and in moderation.

- Chew a piece of sugarless gum.
- Indulge in a small piece of dark chocolate.
- Sip a steaming cup of coffee or tea or a refreshing cold drink.
- Eat a deliciously ripe piece of fruit.
- Enjoy a healthy, crunchy snack (celery, carrots, or trail mix)

Touch

- Wrap yourself in a warm blanket.
- Pet a dog or cat.
- Hold a comforting object (a stuffed animal, a favorite memento).
- Give yourself a hand or neck massage.
- Wear clothing that feels soft against your skin.
- Drip cold water on your wrists or splash your face.

Use Your Senses to Relieve Stress



HelpGuide



KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Movement

If you tend to shut down when you're under stress or have experienced trauma, stress-relieving activities that get you moving may be particularly helpful.

- Run in place or jump up and down (If you're at work, try some deskercises).
- Dance
- Stretch or roll your head in circles.
- Go for a short walk.
- Squeeze a rubbery stress ball.

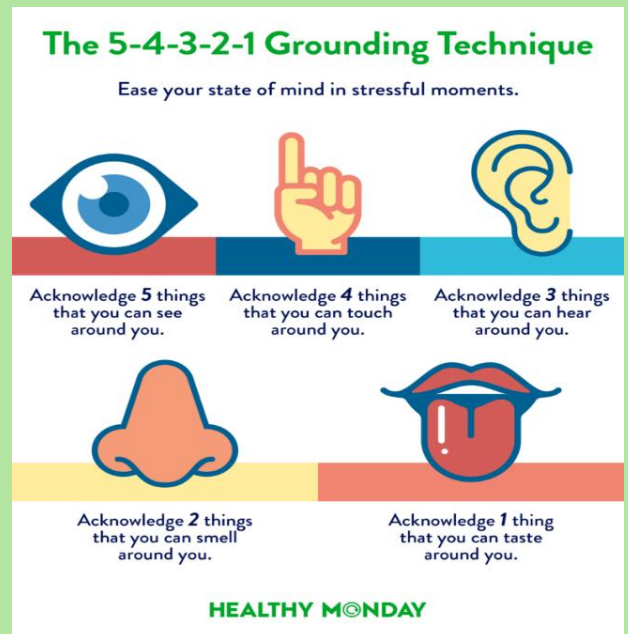
Now, what if you find yourself stressed in the heat of the moment, during a high-pressure job interview, for example, or a disagreement with your spouse? You can't just excuse yourself to take a walk on the beach or put on your favorite smooth jazz record. In these situations, you need something more immediate and accessible.

The 5-4-3-2-1 Technique is a grounding exercise that helps reduce anxiety by using your 5 senses to anchor you in the present moment. It breaks the cycle of panic by shifting focus from anxious thoughts to your immediate surroundings. The table to the right demonstrates how it works:

It's not easy to remember to use your senses in the middle of a stressful situation. At first, it will feel easier to just give into pressure and tense up. But with time, calling upon your senses will become second nature. Think of the process like learning to drive or play golf. You don't master the skill in one lesson; you have to practice until it becomes second nature. Eventually you'll feel like you're forgetting something if you don't tune into your body during challenging times. Here's how to make it a habit:

Start small

Instead of testing your quick stress relief tools on a source of major stress, start with a predictable low-level source of stress, like cooking dinner at the end of a long day or sitting down to pay bills.





KSC FITNESS CENTER

Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
May 4, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Identify and target

Think of just one low-level stressor that you know will occur several times a week, such as commuting. Vow to target that stressor with quick stress relief every time. After a few weeks, target a second stressor and so on.

Test-drive sensory input

If you are practicing quick stress relief on your commute to work, bring a scented handkerchief or a car freshener with you one day, try music another day, and try a movement the next day. Keep experimenting until you find a clear winner.

Have fun with the process

If something doesn't work, don't force it. Move on until you find what works best for you. It should be pleasurable and noticeably calming.

Talk about it

Telling friends or family members about the stress-relief strategies you're trying out will help you integrate them into your life. As an added bonus, it's bound to start an interesting conversation. Remember, everyone relates to the topic of stress.

Social interaction is your body's most evolved and surefire strategy for regulating the nervous system. Talking face-to-face with a relaxed and caring listener can help you quickly calm down and release tension. Although you can't always have a pal to lean on in the middle of a stressful situation, maintaining a network of close relationships is vital for your mental health. Between sensory-based stress relief and good listeners, you'll have your bases covered.

References:

<https://www.helpguide.org/mental-health/stress/quick-stress-relief>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relievers/art-20047257>

We Appreciate Your Feedback!

[Fitness Survey](#) - [Health Education & Wellness Program \(HEWP\) Survey](#)



The KSC Fitness Center Team

Kennedy Space Center Health Education & Wellness Program (HEWP)

KSC Fitness Center, Bldg. M7-0355, Rm. #1514, NEM-010

o: 321.867.7829

<https://mescforyou.ksc.nasa.gov/FitnessCenter>

KSC-DL-MES-Fitness@nasa.gov