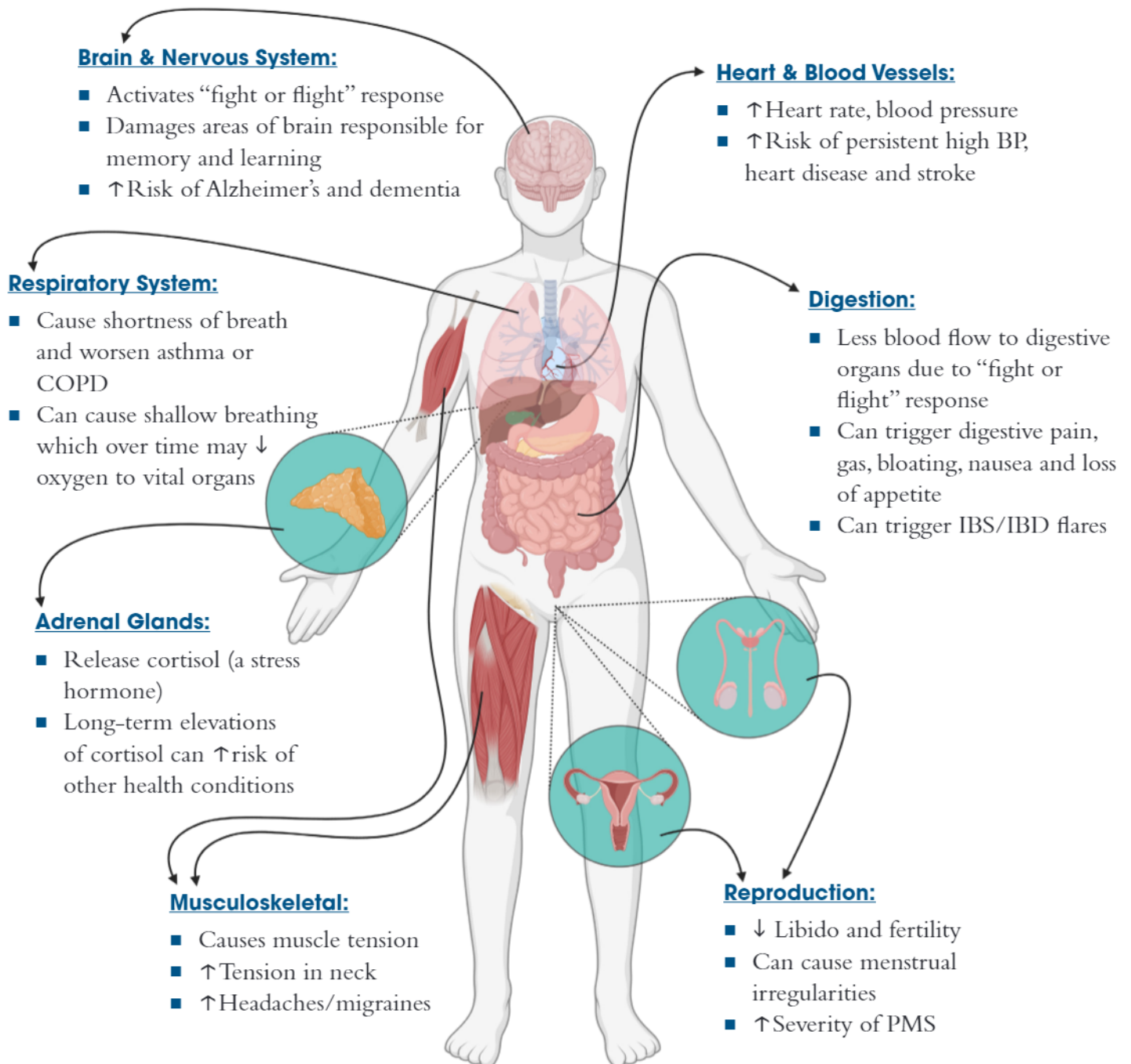


The body's stress response handles physical (e.g., sprained ankle) or mental (e.g., worry) stressors. Chronic stress is a term that describes prolonged periods of mental stress which can have lasting effects on the entire body. People who report higher levels of chronic stress are more likely to develop heart disease, depression, diabetes, dementia, cancer, digestive symptoms, and more.



BP - blood pressure, IBS - irritable bowel syndrome, IBD - Irritable bowel disease, PMS - pre-menstrual syndrome, COPD - chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Common Chronic Stressors Include:

- Information overload from social media and news
- Relationship conflicts
- Expectations to multitask at work and at home
- Social isolation
- Finances
- Managing chronic illness
- Traumatic events (e.g., death of a loved one, COVID-19)

Tips for Reducing Chronic Stress:

Day-to-day stress is unavoidable, but it does not have to turn into chronic stress that negatively impacts your health. There are many ways to manage stress – from daily activities like deep breathing to longer-term strategies like counseling. Finding a variety of techniques that work for you will help you build resilience and support your overall wellbeing for years to come.

- Take deep breaths as outlined in IFM's **Breathing Techniques to Soothe the Soul**
- Get at least 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night
- Exercise, but not too much
- Talk to a counselor or ask your functional medicine practitioner for a referral
- Start a gratitude journal
- Meditate
- Optimize your nutrition to support a healthy stress response (healthy protein, fats and a variety of colorful vegetables and fruits)
- Socialize with supportive friends or family
- Take a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course
- Create and reassess your “To-Do” list, handoff things that others can help with
- Spend time in nature
- Do a digital detox (e.g. no electronic devices for 24-hours, or a weekend)
- Reframe your self-talk (e.g. Instead of “They rejected my job application,” think “I wasn’t rejected, I’m being redirected towards something better.”)

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