Adjustment Disorder

What is it?

Adjustment disorder means that you have emotional or behavioral problems because of stress. But your response to the stress is far more severe than a normal response. It is severe enough to affect your work or social life and may cause depression and physical pains and problems. Events that may cause this response can include a divorce, money problems, or starting school or a new job. It might be anything that causes some stress.

This disorder is most often a short-term problem. It happens within 3 months of the stressful event or change. If the response lasts longer than 6 months after the event ends, you may have a more serious disorder.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Go to all counseling sessions. Do not skip any because you are feeling better.
- If your doctor prescribed medicines, take them exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. You will get more details on the specific medicines your doctor prescribes.
- Discuss the causes of your stress with a good friend or family member. Or you can join a support group for people with similar problems. Talking to others sometimes relieves stress.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.

Relaxation techniques

Do relaxation exercises 10 to 20 minutes a day. You can play soothing, relaxing music while you do them, if you wish.
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- Tell others in your house that you are going to do your relaxation exercises. Ask them not to disturb you.
- Find a comfortable, quiet place.
- Lie down on your back, or sit with your back straight.
- Focus on your breathing. Make it slow and steady.
- Breathe in through your nose. Breathe out through either your nose or mouth.
- Breathe deeply, filling up the area between your navel and your rib cage. Breathe so that your belly goes up and down.
- Do not hold your breath.
- Breathe like this for 5 to 10 minutes. Notice the feeling of calmness throughout your whole body.

As you continue to breathe slowly and deeply, relax by doing these next steps for another 5 to 10 minutes:

- Tighten and relax each muscle group in your body. Start at your toes, and work your way up to your head.
- Imagine your muscle groups relaxing and getting heavy.
- Empty your mind of all thoughts.
- Let yourself relax more and more deeply.
- Be aware of the state of calmness that surrounds you.
- When your relaxation time is over, you can bring yourself back to alertness by moving your fingers and toes. Then move your hands and feet. And then move your entire body. Sometimes people fall asleep during relaxation. But they most often wake up soon.
- Always give yourself time to return to full alertness before you drive a car. Wait to do anything that might cause an accident if you are not fully alert. Never play a relaxation tape while you drive a car.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You feel you cannot stop from hurting yourself or someone else.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You can't go to your counseling sessions.
- You do not get better as expected.

For more information go to:

- [kp.org/santaclara/bhc](http://kp.org/santaclara/bhc)
- [Adjustment Disorder: After Your Visit](#)
- [Adjustment Disorder: After Your Child's Visit](#)

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