



Heart Health and Stress

Supporting Your Well-Being On and Off the Job

The Hidden Link Between Stress and Heart Health

Your work demands strength, skill, and resilience. But even the toughest among us aren't immune to stress—and when stress becomes chronic, it can take a serious toll on your heart.

Stress affects your body in ways you might not notice right away. It raises blood pressure, increases inflammation, and can lead to unhealthy coping habits like smoking, overeating, or skipping exercise. Over time, these effects increase the risk of heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes.

The good news? You have more control than you think. Understanding the connection between stress and heart health is the first step toward protecting both your body and your peace of mind.



How Stress Impacts the Heart:

- Raises blood pressure and heart rate
- Increases cortisol (stress hormone) levels
- Promotes inflammation in blood vessels
- Disrupts sleep and recovery
- Encourages unhealthy habits (e.g., poor diet, smoking, alcohol use)

Stress is part of life—but it doesn't have to control your life. MAP is here to help you manage it in ways that support your health and your future.

Recognizing Stress and Taking Action

Stress doesn't always look like panic or burnout. Sometimes it shows up as irritability, fatigue, or even physical pain. Many union members push through these symptoms, thinking it's just part of the job. But ignoring stress can lead to long-term health consequences.

It's important to recognize the signs early and take steps to reduce the load. That doesn't mean quitting your job or making drastic changes—it means building small, sustainable habits that protect your heart and your mind.

Common Signs of Chronic Stress:

- Frequent headaches or muscle tension
- Trouble sleeping or staying asleep
- Feeling overwhelmed or irritable
- Chest tightness or rapid heartbeat
- Changes in appetite or energy levels

Tools to Manage Stress:

- **Deep breathing:** Just 5 minutes a day can lower blood pressure.
- **Physical activity:** Walking, stretching, or lifting can release tension.
- **Connection:** Talk to a friend, coworker, or MAP counselor.
- **Boundaries:** Learn to say no when your plate is full.
- **Mindfulness:** Try guided meditation or simply pause to notice your surroundings.

MAP offers confidential support to help you build these tools into your routine. You don't have to do it alone.

Building a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle That Works for You

Protecting your heart isn't about perfection—it's about consistency. The most effective changes are the ones that fit your life and values. Whether you're working long shifts, juggling family responsibilities, or dealing with financial stress, there are ways to support your heart health without adding pressure.

Start with what feels doable. Maybe it's swapping one sugary drink for water, taking a walk after dinner, or calling MAP to talk through a tough week. Every step counts.

Heart-Healthy Habits That Support Mental Wellness:

- Eat more whole foods: fruits, vegetables, lean proteins
- Get 7–8 hours of sleep each night
- Limit alcohol and tobacco use
- Stay active—aim for 30 minutes most days
- Practice gratitude and positive thinking
- Schedule regular checkups with your doctor

Your heart is more than a muscle—it's a reflection of how you live, love, and cope. Taking care of it means taking care of yourself.

Ulliance is here to support you every step of the way. Whether you're facing stress, health concerns, or just need someone to talk to, we're ready to listen.

**For more information, tools, resources, or app information,
call your Life Advisor Member Assistance Program!**



**Ulliance provides no cost, confidential, short-term counseling
for you & your family.**

Call us- we're here to help **800.448.8326**