

# AVOIDING THE TERRIBLE "HOLIDAY DISEASE"

For most of us a hard-earned rest is something we contemplate, dream about, plan, and talk about for months before the actual happy day arrives. **But how often have you commenced a holiday only to come down with the flu, a migraine, a "back attack", or an even worse health crisis still?** If this has ever happened to you, read this article now, and read it attentively, and heed its message. Ignore this advice at your own (and your family's) peril.



"You work hard for your money!" Spend more hours working than what you get paid for and don't get the recognition and reward that you deserve? Holidays of one sort or another are always fast approaching and thanks to downsizing, you have got "heaps" to do before you can possibly leave your desk unattended for a few restful weeks. You know that if your work isn't up to date before you leave, no-one else will take up the slack. After all, they're all behind schedule as well! Your lunch break is shrinking even though you'd committed to getting to work half an hour early.

It's dark when you get home and because the kids haven't seen you enough lately they are feral. Even though you crave some time with the family you can't wait till they go to bed so you can have some peace and quiet. You don't have any trouble dropping off in front of the TV, but when you finally crawl into bed it is hard work getting off to sleep. Despite the fact that you've been feeling pretty darned tired, you awake early (if not through the night) and can't doze back off to sleep. You finally nod off fifteen minutes before the alarm is due to go off.

You sort of know that you haven't been eating too well but you really don't have the energy or motivation to prepare proper meals: Fast food and take-away are a regular part of the menu. On weekends you take the family out for a meal because you've all been so busy and deserve a bit of a treat. Exercise has been non-existent, but that's OK because you have made plans to walk and swim every day while on holidays, and might even go for a jog or surf. Who knows, if there's a gym in the town where you are staying you may even take out a fortnight's membership!

At last you've made it. Maybe you drank a bit too much at the work break-up – you might have even said a couple of things you should regret. But it's all a bit of a blur. Packing the bags and the car weren't quite as bad as you thought they might be. The kids were even sort of well behaved on the journey. There was a few terse words exchanged while unpacking and "setting up camp", but you are on holiday!

## Then it happens:

**1) You awake on the second morning with an itchy and sniffling nose. You haven't had a cold for ages, but end up with the worst case of flu you've had in years.** It takes the first ten days of your vacation to start even feeling human again. You don't get back to full health until your second week back at work.

Or, **2) You wake up after the first night in a strange bed and you can't turn your neck!** Your head is tilted to one side and trying to straighten it sends shockwaves of pain into your shoulder. All those plans of swimming have just gone up in smoke as you'd drown trying to do doggy paddle, let-alone freestyle.

Or, **3) You've waited for ages to get the tinny into the water, but as you push what seems like a light weight off the back of the trailer, a jolt of pain emanates from your lower back.** You can't straighten up and end up spending the first week of your holidays flat on your back.

Or, **4) For some unknown reason you start developing weird symptoms.** You can't even fully explain them to the doctor. Sort of nauseous, aches and pains which change location every day, fuzzy in the head, bowels doing strange things and so on. You spend more time in the doctor's waiting room and have more blood tests than you've had in the last 10 years! By the end of the holiday you are none the wiser as to the terminal illness you are convinced you are suffering from, but the symptoms have pretty much disappeared any way.

Or, **5) You have a migraine headache.** Not just a mild one either. It wipes you out for two days. Sure you've been having some tension headaches at the end of the working day. And you've had a couple of mild migraines on the weekend that disappeared after a Panadeine Forte. But this headache is horrible. And to make matters worse, you have two more during the course of your holiday.

**It's enough to put you off wanting to ever have another holiday!**

**All of these scenarios can basically be traced back to one root cause: the body's response (and eventual lack of response) to sustained stress.**



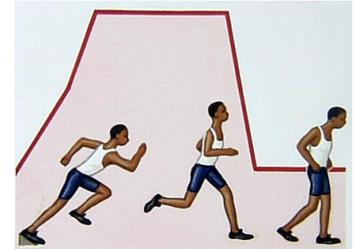
Decades ago Hans Selye described **the three stages of our response to stress – alarm, adaptation then exhaustion**. In the early days of being under stress your body goes into a state of readiness for action – the commonly quoted "fight and flight response". During this stage your adrenaline levels are high, your energy levels are heightened and your productivity levels will be inspired.

We could be talking about mental, emotional, physical, chemical and /or even spiritual variants of stress.

This cannot be sustained: Your body will explode if it tries to sustain this level of stimulation. So it starts to adapt. Different hormones and nervous system chemicals come into play; these attempt to divert some of the potential harm of burning out. There's an internal battle going on between survival tactics and attack strategies.

Then exhaustion follows. Now here's the bit that is relevant to today's discussion. **No-one has fully explained the chemistry and physiology of why the exhaustion stage is activated on holiday but we do know something happens in the "let-down" that gives your body permission to crash!**

So how do we avoid this collapse? Obviously the strategies need to confront the three stages of the stress response: Minimize how much we push our body into "alarm", assist the recuperative processes involved in adaptation, and ensure that the body is not at the point of exhaustion when arriving at the holiday resort.



**Here are my top eight tips for managing your last few weeks at work:**

"Try entering into a holiday state of mind and body today – so that it won't be such a big let down when you really get there."

**1) "The graveyard is full of indispensables":** The secret to not overworking coming up to a holiday is to understand the difference between important and urgent. Spend your time working on the most important activities of your job, and not putting out scrub fires. That way if you don't get everything finished before you leave, at least the main stuff will be under control.

**2) Keep exercising!** Make this a non-negotiable in your work schedule. (Notice I include this in your work schedule and not your home schedule). Not only does exercise clear your mind, and keep you physically fitter to cope at work; it helps burn off some of the damaging hormones and chemicals produced in the alarm and adaptation stages of stress.



**3) Eat better than you do the rest of the year:** Eat more vegetables and salads. Snack on fresh fruit and nuts. Drink volumes of water while working instead of extra cups of coffee. The effects of stress will make you crave fat, sugar and caffeine; don't listen to those inner voices telling you to give in!

**4) Increase your vitamin intake (or if you normally don't take vitamins, start):** Start taking some zinc in the last week or two of work and during your holiday: Double your dosage of Vitamin C. Take some executive stress Vitamin B tabs. If you take superfoods (algae, sprouts, and herbs) then take them twice a day instead of once.

**5) Keep up your chiropractic adjustments:** So often we see people "disappear" over the last few weeks of the year only to have to see them half a dozen times during the holidays because they've had a set-back. It may seem a waste of time to have an adjustment while you're so pre-occupied, stressed and busy, but that's actually when you need it the most! Did you hear this? The less time you think you have to keep up regenerative activities – the more you need to do them!

**6) Maintain your boundaries:** If you're spending so much time on your work that you are not working on your other relationships, then you are missing out on some of the best coping strategies available. Keep talking to your loved-ones, keep talking to God, keep reading, meditating, praying and so on.

**7) Have fun – preferably at work!** If you are not having fun at work then it means you are going to have to make even more time outside of work hours to do it. It's that important for your stress management to be laughing and feeling joy that it cannot be put off. So start having fun, or else!

**8) Take more regular holidays:** If you have holidays accrued then plan a strategy with your employer to take them. This way you won't have two years of accumulated stress waiting to pounce on you when you finally do take that well earned rest.

**Try entering into a holiday state of mind and body today – so that it won't be such a big let down when you really get there.**

**This is an excerpt from the Super Healthy Wellness Coaching Manual: Available at [www.superhealthy.com.au](http://www.superhealthy.com.au) and at 40 Park Cres, South Geelong. Call 0419 104 076**