

# Stress Reduction

Chronic stress raises cortisol, elevates blood pressure, drives visceral fat accumulation, impairs insulin sensitivity, and worsens every number in the ABCs framework. Stress management is not a soft recommendation — it is a measurable cardiovascular intervention.



## Breathing & Mindfulness

- Box breathing: 4 seconds in, 4 hold, 4 out, 4 hold — repeat 4 cycles
- 10-minute body scan before bed — proven to lower nocturnal blood pressure
- Diaphragmatic breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system within 2 minutes
- Apps: Insight Timer, Calm, Headspace — 10 minutes daily is the evidence-based minimum



## Movement as Medicine

- Post-dinner walk (10–15 min) — lowers cortisol AND post-meal blood sugar simultaneously
- 150 min/week moderate exercise reduces all-cause mortality by 31%
- Strength training twice/week reduces anxiety markers independently of aerobic exercise
- Any movement is better than none — start where you are, not where you think you should be



## Lifestyle Anchors

- Identify and address the single highest-stress item in your life — often the most productive intervention
- Alcohol audit: alcohol amplifies cortisol recovery overnight. Reducing it improves stress resilience measurably
- Social connection: isolation is an independent cardiovascular risk factor (HR ~1.29 for heart disease)
- Nature exposure: 20–30 minutes in natural settings reduces cortisol by ~15–20% in multiple studies

[Managing Stress](#) website