

Case Study Emily Coutes (31)

Emily Coutes, aged 31, is a horse riding instructor and a full time mum whose responsibilities sometimes get on top of her

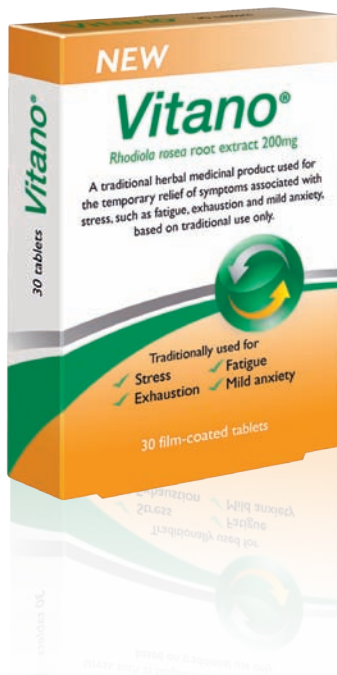
As a mum who works full time I put a lot of pressure on myself to be the 'perfect mum' to my two little boys who are 2 and 4 years old, as well as hold down a job. I work at an equestrian centre so I have a lot of early starts which can be pretty exhausting.

Since having children I worry a lot more about things, as I have two lovely little people who are solely dependent on me. Sometimes it gets too much and I begin to get stressed out about the littlest things, for example when the children play too loudly I snap at them - then immediately regret it when I see them look upset with me.

The smallest things such as needing to get petrol or not being able to find a parking space when I am late on the nursery run could have me in tears.

I was really starting to feel on edge more and more, especially at stressful times like Christmas and holidays. A friend recommended that I try Vitano, to help me cope with the stress at times like these. Even after using it for a few days I noticed that I was a lot more able to keep my composure when in stressful situations, and I also have found myself less tired and exhausted which is great for the kids and me!

This is Emily's personal experience; the benefits of this product have not been scientifically proven.



Vitano - Traditionally used to Help you Cope with Stress... Naturally

Vitano is a traditional herbal medicinal product used for the temporary relief of symptoms associated with stress, such as fatigue, exhaustion and mild anxiety exclusively based on long-standing use as a traditional remedy.

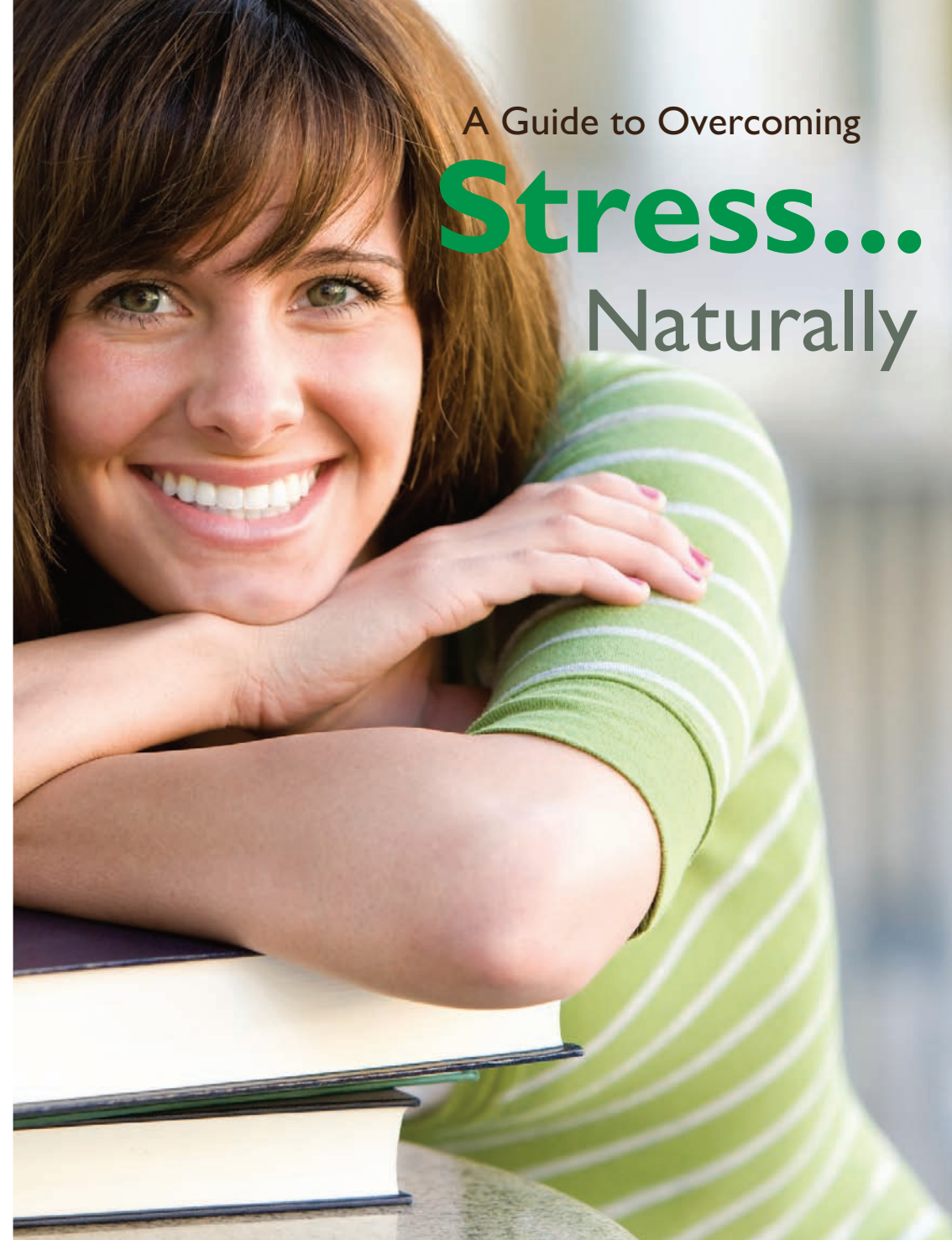
Available from leading pharmacies and health food stores.

Price: £12.99 for 30 tablets.

Each Vitano tablet contains 200mg of *Rhodiola rosea* root extract.

Take 2 tablets daily, one before breakfast, and one before lunch. Swallow the tablets whole, with a glass of water, 30 minutes before food.

Always read the label.



A Guide to Overcoming Stress... Naturally

For more information telephone: **01628 401980**
or visit **www.vitano.co.uk**

Q&A - Including a question and answer section with award-winning health writer and GP, **Dr Sarah Brewer**

The Ins Outs of Stress

Stress is a modern term that simply means you are experiencing too much pressure. A certain amount of pressure is beneficial, as it helps you find the necessary reserves to meet life's challenges. But when pressure falls outside the range with which you feel comfortable, it quickly gives rise to the unpleasant physical and emotional symptoms we know as stress.

Different people are comfortable with different amounts of pressure, and how you cope will vary from time to time. One day you may feel calm and laid back, able to field anything thrown your way. The next day, you may find even the slightest extra demand is overwhelming. Stress can also result from boredom. Being stuck in a rut, with little stimulation, is just as unpleasant as too many tasks and not enough time.

What Causes Stress?

Stress can arise from a variety of sources, both at work and in the home. But whatever the source of your stress, the symptoms remain the same, as they are caused by stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol.



Symptoms of Stress

Pressure is so important for survival, that your body produces a stress response known as the flight-or-flight reaction. Triggered by adrenaline, a hormone produced in your adrenal glands, this puts your whole body on red alert.

- Your pulse rate and blood pressure increase so more blood is pumped to your muscles and brain
- Blood is diverted away from your intestines to your brain (for quick thinking), muscles (for exercise) and skin (for rapid cooling on exertion)
- Sweat glands activate, ready to cool you down during sudden exercise; you literally sweat with fear
- Muscles tense, ready for action – you stiffen and tremble with fear and your voice becomes high-pitched and shaky
- You breathe more quickly to bring more oxygen into your body – you may breathe in suddenly and deeply, described as catching your breath
- Blood sugar levels increase for instant energy, strength and speed
- Your pupils dilate to improve your field of vision – your eyes literally widened with fear
- Your bladder and bowels may empty to make you lighter for running; under severe stress, you may even be sick, too
- Chemicals are released into the blood that make it clot more easily, and cause damaged blood vessels to constrict to reduce bleeding from wounds

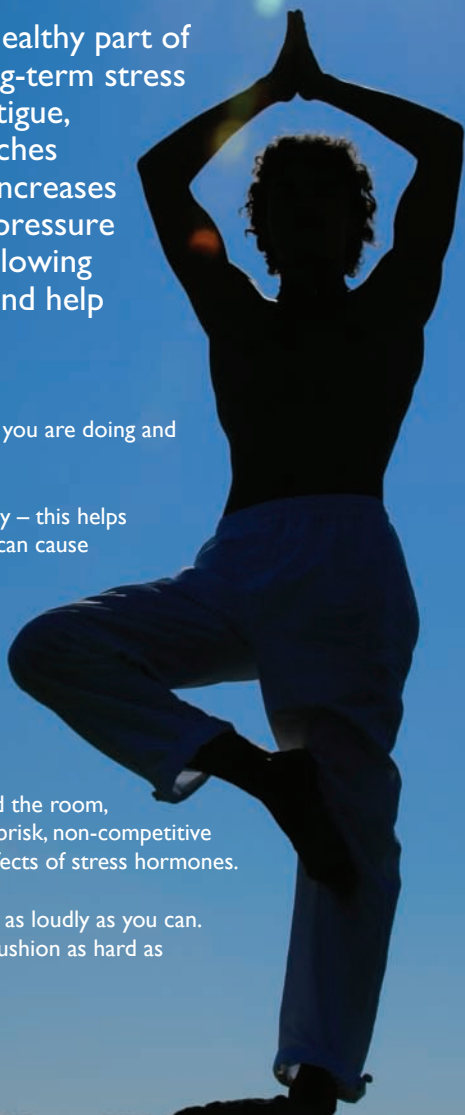
The stress reaction prepares your body for running away or physical combat – activities which neutralise the effects of stress hormones and allow you to return to the more normal rest-and-digest state. Unfortunately, as the need to fight or flee rarely occurs in modern life, the effects of stress can continue to build up so you feel jittery, taut and trembly.



20 Top Tips to Help you De-Stress...

Short term positive pressure is a healthy part of every day life, but excessive or long-term stress has a negative effects, leading to fatigue, exhaustion, anxiety, tension headaches and difficulty sleeping. Stress also increases your risk of long-term high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. The following tips can help defuse the pressure and help you relax.

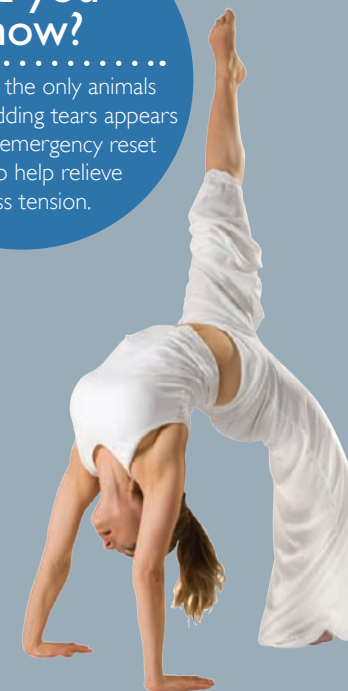
- 1 When you start feeling stressed, stop what you are doing and inwardly say "Calm" to yourself.
- 2 Concentrate on breathing slowly and deeply – this helps stop the shallow, rapid over-breathing that can cause pins and needles round your mouth, which may make you feel panicky.
- 3 Stand up and gently stretch to your fullest possible extent. Shake your hands and arms briskly, then shrug your shoulders to help reduce muscle tension.
- 4 Go for a brisk walk, even if it is only around the room, or up and down stairs a few times; regular brisk, non-competitive exercise helps to neutralise the negative effects of stress hormones.
- 5 Go somewhere private and groan or shout as loudly as you can. Some people find it helps to punch a soft cushion as hard as possible to let off some steam.



- 6 Close your eyes and image yourself somewhere calm and quiet – beside a lake, on a beach, or in a forest glade.
- 7 Listen to calming background music to help you unwind – natural sounds like recordings of the sea, bird songs, a babbling brook or waterfall are ideal.
- 8 Choose a personal positive thought (eg I am feeling positive pressure, not negative stress) and repeat this regularly to yourself.
- 9 Eat a healthy diet, little and often, and avoid skipping meals. Have healthy snacks to hand such as dried or fresh fruit, wholemeal biscuits to avoid dips in blood sugar levels that can trigger a physical stress response.
- 10 Drink plenty of fluids, as dehydration can contribute to stress-related symptoms of tiredness, headache and poor concentration.
- 11 Keep your alcohol intake within safe limits, as it's easy to rely too much on alcohol when feeling stressed. There's a handy drinks calculator at www.drinkaware.co.uk
- 12 Avoid excessive caffeine intake, which can cause jitteriness and mimic the stress response. Cut back on caffeine intake slowly. Try fruit and herbal teas, and de-caffeinated coffee.
- 13 Try to work out what people or situations are making you feel stressed – keeping a stress diary can help pinpoint your triggers.
- 14 Plan sensible strategies to avoid or overcome stressful situations – for example, if you find shopping after work stressful, try ordering your shopping on-line and having it delivered direct to your door.
- 15 Organise your life and manage your time more effectively - prioritise tasks so you can deal with pressures one at a time.
- 16 Be more assertive. Saying "No" to unreasonable demands will help reduce the pressure you are under.

Did you know?

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Humans are the only animals who cry - shedding tears appears to act as an emergency reset button to help relieve excess tension.



- 17 Make a point of complementing others around you – if you make them feel good about themselves, the positive effects will wear off on you, too.
- 18 Consider enrolling in a Yoga, Qigong or Tai chi class to experience calm, meditative exercise.
- 19 Watch a comedy or visit a website specialising in corny jokes - laughter is a great antidote to stress.
- 20 Take extracts from *Rhodiola rosea*, a herbal remedy that is traditionally used to help you cope better with stress. *Rhodiola* is an alpine plant growing over 3000 metres above sea level. It is also known as golden or Arctic root and has been used as a herbal medicine for over a thousand years. It has been used for calming benefits to reduce fatigue and exhaustion. Importantly, *Rhodiola rosea* is not known to be addictive.

Streamlining your life...

There's rarely enough time in the day, but creating more time for the things that matter to you, and spending less time on everything else, helps to reduce life's pressures.

Make a To Do list

This is best done at the end of each day, rather than in the morning, so you can get straight on to the first task while you are fresh. Reserve blocks of time for different activities and don't jump from job to job. Add to the list as new tasks appear and tick off items as you complete them. If an item appears regularly, consider whether you can remove it by delegating it to someone else.

Delegation

is the art of freeing up your own time by donating a task to someone else who is equally capable of doing it. Some people find delegation easy, while others find it harder to relinquish control. Start by assigning household chores to other family members so everyone does their fair share – use a rota if necessary.

Don't handle things twice

File post and email as soon as you've read them to avoid wasting time re-processing them later. Similarly, transfer dirty clothes from the bedroom laundry basket straight into the washing machine – not into the "waiting-to-be-washed" pile in the utility.

Set a routine

Before going to bed, minimise tomorrow's morning rush by laying the breakfast table and getting out the clothes you intend to wear. Always eat breakfast to fuel the coming day.

Did you know

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Taking regular work breaks during the day helps keep you fresh and more efficient.

Did you know

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Some of the best ideas come when using enforced activities (vacuuming, walking the dog, mowing the lawn) as thinking and planning time.

Q&A

with Dr Sarah Brewer

Dr Sarah Brewer qualified as a doctor from Cambridge University. After working in general practice and sexual health, she now specialises in health communication and is an award-winning health writer.



🕒 **Whenever I feel stressed I comfort eat. Apart from not keeping snacks in the house, what else can I do to stop the weight gain?**

A Over 40% of adults resort to comfort eating when they feel anxious, lonely, sad or stressed. Boredom is also a common trigger. Keeping a diary of what you eat, and when, together with a note of your mood at the time can help pinpoint circumstances that trigger the snacking impulse – for example, after getting home from work, after the kids have left for school, or late in the evening. During danger times, and whenever a snack attack comes on, exercise can help to burn off the urge to eat. Brisk walking, cycling or simply running up and down stairs a few times are ideal. This strategy can help with weight maintenance, too. Some people find that brushing their teeth with a strong flavoured toothpaste (to satisfy your taste buds) helps to combat late night peckishness, as can unwinding with a relaxing, candle-lit, aromatherapy bath.

🕒 **Whereas I used to enjoy going away on holiday, I now find it all very tiring and stressful. Is there anything I can do to help calm me down?**

A Travelling away from home can cause stress due to delays and worry about making connections. Many people find it easier to holiday closer to home. Rather than packing and racing away as soon as you finish work, spend a few days pottering around the house and visiting local attractions before taking a shorter break away – perhaps a long weekend at a relaxing Spa or a romantic Country House Hotel. Rhodiola root is a herb traditionally used to help reduce stress, fatigue, exhaustion and mild anxiety.

🕒 **My sister thrives on stress and does a lot of public speaking. So why do I shake at the thought of just putting up my hand in a meeting?**

A Public speaking is at the top of many people's stress list. But like most things in life, practice and familiarity makes things easier. While the first ever public talk may cause a lot of stress, the 20th lecture is taken in your stride. Some people have a so-called Type A personality and are highly competitive, while others are a Type B with a more relaxed approach to life. Whereas a Type A tends to live to work, Type Bs tend to work in order to live. Whichever type you are, when pressure builds up above your comfort zone you will feel stressed, and need to take measures to control your symptoms.