



Market volatility is bad for your health

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Worries about your 401(k) keeping you up at night? Yanking out your hair over the recent market turmoil? Feeling blue over all the red you see in your investment portfolio?

Here's a hot tip: Stop stressing so much about financial losses. Start thinking about the effects of high stress on your health.



Lucas Jackson | Reuters

Traders on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Sure, the issues in the financial markets are real. Investor concerns about [China](#), [Greece](#) and elsewhere resulted in a 1,000-point plunge in the [Dow](#) last month.

But whether you are a trader, finance pro or an ordinary investor fretting over an IRA, there are health hazards, long-term and short-term, mild and serious, that can wreak hormonal havoc on your mind and body, causing burnout, depression, hair-graying and loss. And those are the milder maladies.

Let's start at the top (of the body). The advent of computerized trading means most traders no longer even stand and physically trade stocks and bonds in the pits of Wall Street and Chicago. Everything

is done online, which means hours hunched at desks staring at glowing computer screens. Eyestrain, shoulder or neck pain, and headaches ensue.

Stress and bad eating habits lead to fatigue, foggy thinking, bad judgment, weight gain and stomach problems.

Stress also can lead to more serious symptoms, such as irregular heartbeats, and self-defeating self-medication, such as heavy drinking and dangerous drug-use habits.

Then there is the extreme: The recent market stress in China also has resulted in at least one case of suicide. Think that's rare? The global financial crisis led to more than 10,000 suicides in the U.S., UK and Canada between 2008 and 2010, according to the British Journal of Psychiatry, citing researchers at the University of Oxford.

High stress isn't always visible. It requires measuring the hormone cortisol. Spikes and elevated levels can lead to increased sugar levels that may induce pre-diabetes or weaken immune systems. Stress can also diminish other hormones—testosterone, serotonin and dopamine, in particular. Good-bye sleep. Good-bye sex drive. Good-bye feeling good.

Yes, anti-depressants and anti-anxiety drugs can alter chemical imbalances in the brain and reduce some stress-related mental health issues. But they come with some of their own unpleasant side effects, and are probably an imperfect solution, especially if they are being used to mask one or more underlying issues rather than to provide a cure.

A better hack: Get up early; go to the gym. Exercise is the single best way help combat stress and depression. Boxing helps get rid of aggression. Running or cycling helps tone muscles and brings fresh oxygen to the lungs.

Nutrition matters, too, and eating healthy foods are better than popping food supplements.

Also, think about meditation. A study by the University of Wisconsin and Harvard University showed that meditation is more effective than doing even quiet activities in helping to lower cortisol to healthy levels.

And, attitude and perspective go a long way in both your health and investing. If you don't like how things look in the market, remember you are playing a long game. Give it a week. Things might change.

Bottom line: take stock of your health; stress less over your stocks.

Commentary by Dr. Florence Comite, a noted endocrinologist and founder of [ComiteMD](#), a private precision-medicine practice in Manhattan. She is the author of "Keeping It Up: The Power of Precision Medicine to Conquer Low T and Revitalize Your Life." Follow her on Twitter [@ComiteMD](#).