

STRESS



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

The physical, mental and emotional reactions experienced as the result of changes and demands in one's life. The changes can be both large and small. Everyone responds to life's changes differently. Positive stress can be a motivator, while negative stress can set in when these changes and demands overwhelm the person.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Physical—Muscle tension, headache, chest pain, upset stomach, diarrhea or constipation, racing heartbeat, cold clammy hands, fatigue, profuse sweating, rashes, rapid breathing, shaking, tics, jumpiness, poor or excessive appetite, weakness, tiredness, dizziness.
- Emotional—Anger, low self-esteem, depression, apathy, irritability, fear and phobic responses, difficulty concentrating, guilt, worry, agitation, anxiety, panic.
- Behavioral—Alcohol or drug abuse, increase in smoking, sleep disorders, overeating, memory loss, confusion.

CAUSES

In a stressful situation, the body responds by increasing the production of certain hormones, causing changes in the heart rate, blood pressure, metabolism and physical activity.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Changes in lifestyle and disruptions in one's normal routine, which can bring about stress.

Some of the common causes of stress are:

- Recent death of a loved one (spouse, child, friend).
- Loss of anything valuable to you.
- Injuries or severe illnesses.
- Getting fired or changing jobs.
- Recent move to a new city or state.
- Sexual difficulties between you and your partner.
- Business or financial reverses or taking on a large debt, such as to purchase a new home.
- Regular conflict between you and a family member, close friend or business associate.
- Constant fatigue brought about by inadequate rest, sleep or recreation.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- To help prevent negative stress, try to take charge of those aspects of your life that you can manage.
- Since stress cannot always be prevented, learn techniques to cope to protect your mental and physical health. Educate yourself about stress by reading articles and books.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Usually resolved with self-treatment or professional therapy.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Chronic stress can play a role in many health problems, including accidents, arthritis, asthma, cancer, colds, colitis, diabetes, endocrine disorders, fatigue, headaches, backaches, digestive problems, skin disorders, heart disease, high blood pressure, insomnia, muscle aches, sexual dysfunction, ulcers.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include:
- Your own observation of symptoms.
- Medical history and physical exam by a doctor, if necessary.

Here are some tips to help reduce stress:

- Learn a meditation technique, and practice it regularly, daily if possible. There are many methods available.
- Take a short time away from any stressful situation you encounter during a day.
- Learn and practice a muscle-tensing and muscle-relaxing technique.
- Avoid taking your problems home or to bed with you. At the end of the day, spend a few minutes reviewing your entire day's experiences, event by event, as if you're replaying a tape. Release all negative emotions you have harbored (anger, feelings of insecurity or anxiety). Relish all good energy or emotion (loving thoughts, praise, good feelings about your work or yourself). Reach decisions about unfinished events, and release mental or muscular tension. Now you're ready for a relaxing and emotionally healing sleep.
- Join a support group in your community.

MEDICATION

Your doctor may prescribe tranquilizers or antidepressants for a short time.

ACTIVITY

Adopt an exercise program. People in good physical condition are less likely to suffer the negative effects of stress.

DIET

Eat a normal, well-balanced diet. Vitamin supplements may be recommended.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has stress problems.