

Stress

Fact Sheet

What is stress?

Stress is a normal, natural, physical and mental response that helps you cope effectively with a situation. Stress causes your body to produce chemicals that increase your heart rate, blood pressure and your mental focus; enabling you to perform well for a short time in a challenging situation. Too much or regular stress can cause a build-up of the chemicals in your body that can end up impacting on your physical and mental health.

How can you tell if you're stressed?

Mental Health Symptoms	Physical Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling overwhelmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headaches or other aches and pains
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling moody or tearful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscle tension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low mood or sadness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue and tiredness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger, irritability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased heart rate or high blood pressure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty concentrating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating too much or too little
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-esteem, lack of confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoking or using alcohol or other drugs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burnout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upset stomach

Why does a person feel stressed?

Stress affects all of us in different ways, some of the things that can make you feel stressed are:

- Relationships
- Moving to a new place
- Peer pressure
- Being bullied
- New or changed responsibilities
- Grief and loss
- Having unrealistic expectations or demands placed on you either by yourself, a friend or family member
- Exams or assessments
- Problems at school or work

Where to go for help

- Go to your General Practitioner
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- *beyondblue*: 1300 22 4636

More information

- Better Health Channel – Fact Sheet “Stress Affects us in many ways”
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- ReachOut – <http://au.reachout.com>
- Helpguide – www.helpguide.org
- *beyondblue* – www.beyondblue.org.au
- Youth *beyondblue* –
www.youthbeyondblue.com

Quick Tips (what can you do)

- **Identify early warning signs** (e.g. tensing your jaw, grinding your teeth, headaches, feeling irritable or short tempered)
- **Identify your triggers of stress** (e.g. deadlines)
- **Establish routines** in your life for each day and week (e.g. regular times for exercise, relaxation, meals, waking and bedtimes)
- **Spend time with people who care** – share your thoughts and feelings with others
- **Look after your health** – eat healthy food and get regular exercise, take time to do enjoyable or calming activities such as walking, dancing, listening to music
- **Notice your self-talk** – unhelpful things like ‘I can’t cope’, ‘I’m too busy’, ‘I’m so tired’ can make you feel worse, try using more helpful self-talk such as ‘I’m doing okay given what I have to do’, or ‘calm down’, or ‘breathe’.
- **Practice relaxation** – make time to practice relaxation. Planning for things to do each day helps you to look forward to doing them and gives you a sense of pleasure.

RMIT Training Wellbeing Service

The Wellbeing Service is free and confidential for students. To arrange an appointment please email wellbeing@rmit.edu.au