

## Stress Facts

### What is Stress?

Stress is an automatic reaction to danger or demand. It is your body's reaction to some challenging situation that prepares you for action with a "fight or flight" response. Stress hormones - adrenalin, noradrenalin, and cortisol - are pumping out, which makes your blood pressure and heart rate increase and your muscles tighten. Some level of stress can be good in the short-term, especially in emergency situations. It can serve as an incentive or motivator.

### Types of Stress

**Acute:** Immediate stress usually related to a one-time event that comes and goes quickly. Effects can last from minutes to hours, days or weeks.

**Chronic:** Long-term and caused by a series of stressful events or an ongoing situation.

### Causes of Stress

#### External Factors:

- Environmental: noise, bright lights, heat, confined spaces
- Social: rudeness, bossiness, aggressiveness by someone else
- Organizational: rules, regulations, "red tape," deadlines
- Major Life Events: deaths, losses, new responsibilities, changes
- Daily Hassles: tight budget, computer glitches, car breakdowns

#### Internal Factors:

- Lifestyle Choices: caffeine, limited sleep, overloaded schedule
- Negative Self-talk: self-doubt & criticism, pessimism, overthinking
- Mind Traps: unrealistic expectations, personalizing things, rigid thinking, exaggerating, all-or-nothing thinking
- Personality Traits: perfectionist, workaholic, pleaser

### Symptoms of Stress

**Physical:** fatigue, headaches, insomnia, muscle aches/stiffness, heart palpitations, chest pains, abdominal cramps, nausea, trembling, sweating

**Mental:** decreased concentration and memory, indecisiveness, mind racing or going blank, confusion, loss of sense of humor

**Emotional:** anxiety, nervousness, depression, anger, frustration, worry, fear, irritability, impatience, short temper

**Behavioral:** pacing, fidgeting, nail-biting, foot-tapping, increased eating, smoking, drinking, crying, yelling, swearing, blaming, and throwing things