

# Effects of stress

Everyone experiences stress from time to time. It's a natural response that can help our bodies cope with challenging situations. But what happens inside us when we feel stressed? And how might this impact our health?

## Signs and symptoms of stress

Stress can affect our emotions and we may:

- be irritable, angry or tearful
- feel worried, anxious, hopeless or scared
- struggle to make decisions, have racing thoughts or feel overwhelmed
- The physical symptoms of stress include:
- stomach problems, stress headaches and other odd pains including muscle pain
- skin reactions, like stress rashes and hives
- feeling dizzy, sick or faint
- Sometimes, stress causes high blood pressure and chest pains - but these symptoms should stop when your stress goes. If you have any symptoms that you are worried about, or feel you have more severe stress, see a GP.

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Stress can also make us behave differently, especially around:

- how much we eat or exercise
- our habits around drinking, smoking or taking other substances
- how much we see people or do things we used to do or enjoy (avoidance)



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## What causes stress?

The things that cause stress vary from person to person.

The level of stress you are comfortable with may be higher or lower than that of others around you. Stressful feelings typically happen when we feel we do not have the resources to manage the challenges we face.

Pressure at work, school or home, illness, or difficult or sudden life events can all lead to stress.

Possible causes of stress include:

- our genes, upbringing and experiences as children or adults
- personal problems like relationship issues
- life changes, like moving house, having a baby or bereavement
- money worries, housing issues or job problems
- health issues, either for you or someone close to you
- pregnancy and parenting
- loneliness or feeling unsupported

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Try these practical self-care tips, as they might make a big difference

Try positive thinking

Positive thinking can help with stress relief, so take time to think about the good things in your life. Each day, list 3 things you're thankful for, however small.

Talk to someone

Trusted friends, family and colleagues, or contacting a helpline, can help us when we are struggling.

Split up big tasks

You might feel less stressed if you can take practical steps, such as breaking a task down into easier, more manageable chunks. And give yourself credit when you finish a task.

Be more active

Being active regularly can help you to burn off nervous energy, so it could be a way for you to deal with stress. Exercise might also help you manage or reduce stress

Plan ahead

Planning ahead for upcoming stressful days or events - creating a to-do list, planning your journey and listing things you need to take - can really help to relieve stress.