

Causes and Effects of Stress



Anything that brings on feelings of stress is called a stressor. Today, people often face many stressors. Read on to find out the many causes of stress and how stress can affect your body.



Your body's response to stress

When you're faced with stress, your body releases chemicals called hormones. These hormones trigger many changes in your body. For example, your:

- Blood pressure may rise
- Heart rate may increase
- Muscles may tighten
- Stomach may become tense
- Concentration may get worse
- Forgetfulness may get worse

What are stressors?

Stressors are anything that causes you stress. They may include:

- Adapting to constant, rapid change
- Worrying about your finances or the economy
- Handling a major life event, such as changing jobs, marriage, divorce, death of a loved one, or moving to a new home

- Handling more than one major life event at the same time. For instance, dealing with a family illness while changing jobs
- Juggling many roles and responsibilities, such as spouse or life partner, parent, friend, employee, and caregiver for aging parents
- Going from one challenging situation to the next without taking time to relax
- Being overwhelmed by technology. For instance, keeping up with cellphone messages, e-mails, and text messages.

The long-term effects of stress

If you're often under stress, you need to learn to manage it well. Stress can affect your well-being. Over time, you may show some of these symptoms of being stressed:

- **Physical.** You may have colds or flu, or headaches. You may have trouble sleeping or sleep too much, have muscle tension, skin problems, or trouble with digestion.
- **Mental.** You may have trouble thinking and forget things easily. It may be hard to focus and learn. You may have a lot of negative thoughts, and speech problems.
- **Emotional.** You may have anxiety, depression, or anger. You may feel helpless or a lack of purpose. You may have relationship troubles.
- **Behavioral.** You may eat in unhealthy ways, drive recklessly, or abuse alcohol or drugs. You may be accident prone or aggressive.

Getting help for stress

If you don't feel you're managing the stressors in your life well, get help from your healthcare provider or a mental health provider. There are many things that can help you adjust and ease your feelings of stress.

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