

Customer version
March 2019

Managing Stress

What is stress?

There is no universally agreed medical definition of stress. At its most simple, stress is your body's physical response to mental or emotional pressure. Our jobs, relationships, family life or money can all add to our levels of stress. When you're stressed, your body believes it's under attack and switches to what's known as 'fight or flight' mode. As a result, a mix of hormones and chemicals are released into your body so that you prepare for physical action. Blood might also be diverted to muscles, causing you to lose concentration or become less able to digest food. When the threat passes, your body usually returns to normal, but if you're continually under pressure this might not be the case

You can take control. Take the time to understand what stress is, identify the common causes and take positive steps to reduce your own stress or if you're a manager, stress in your team.

What causes stress?

Stress can be triggered by a number of factors.

 Personal	 Poor working relationships	 Serious illness, accident or injury
 Workplace	 Relationship and family problems	 No support/recognition from line manager
 Bereavement	 Poor work life balance	 Loss of job
 Organisational change	 Financial worries	 Divorce/separation
 Poor morale		

Spotting the signs of stress

There's no one single cause of stress but there are signs to watch out for – either in yourself or someone you know.

• Physical	• Forgetfulness	• Anger
• Cognitive	• Loss of appetite	• Shoulder or back pain
• Behavioural	• Tiredness	• Low morale and enthusiasm
• Headaches	• Difficulty in making decisions	• Frustration
• Difficulty concentrating	• Heavy smoking or drinking	• Depression or anxiety
• Increased absence or turnover	• Digestive disorders	• Irritable
• Sweating	• Prone to errors	• Difficulty in sleeping
• Addictive Behaviour (e.g. gambling, drug use)		

How stressed are you?

Online tools can help you understand how stressed you are and the causes of the stress. These are free and easily available to you.



Use the following links to access resources on managing stress

- [How to tackle stress](#)
- [Stress diary](#)
- [Stress Relieving Apps](#)

What resources are available?



- [Managing Stress](#)
 - Understanding and approaching stress
- [Building Resilience](#)
 - Simple lifestyle changes to become more resilient
- [Toolkit for Stress](#)
 - Resources and guides to help deal with stress
- [Mental Health at Work gateway](#)
 - Resources and toolkits for managing your mental health at work
- [Let's talk Mental Health](#)
 - Guidance on who to talk to about mental health

How can I help my team reduce stress?

There are resources to support you if you're a line manager and to help reduce stress in your team. Think about:

- **Identifying** early signs of stress and speak regularly to your team members. Keep a note of what the issues are and what you both agree are the next steps. You could also speak with your HR team, who can offer advice on dealing with the situation
- **Communicating** regularly and clearly with your team. Regular one to one meetings give you both the opportunity to have an open and honest discussion, and perhaps identify when workload is becoming too much
- **Creating a comfortable work environment** – Stress can be exacerbated by noise, temperature, hygiene and you. Remember, your mood sets the tone of your team
- **Demands** – Are the workloads of your team manageable? Encourage people to speak to you if they're feeling overwhelmed or need your support
- **Training** – Make sure your team are equipped to do their job and if not, offer training and support
- **Resilience** – Having resilient people in your team will help them deal with issues as they arise and bounce back from unexpected events

Resources and support for managers



Use the following links to understand more about what you can do as a manager

- [Supporting a colleague with a mental health problem](#)
- [Managers guide to managing stress in the workplace](#)
- [Extended guide to supporting employees with mental health problems](#)
- [Ways to support employees who may be overloaded or under stress](#)
- [Tips for managing employee workload](#)

Useful Resources and Contacts

If you feel things are getting on top of you, speak to your line manager or to a trusted colleague about how you are feeling. Alternatively, you can use the resources below:



Visit Online:

[Mind](#)