

Management of Stress

What are the symptoms of stress?

Pressure at work can be a good thing, it motivates and challenges us. However too much pressure can lead to feelings of not coping and can lead to mental or physical illness. The following changes in behaviour may indicate stress:

- Physical symptoms - tiredness; indigestion and nausea; headaches; aching muscles; or palpitations.
- Mentally – more indecisive; finding it hard to concentrate; loss of memory; feelings of inadequacy; or low self-esteem.
- Emotionally – getting irritable or angry; anxious; hypersensitive; or feeling drained and listless.
- Behavioural – noticeable changes in performance; presenteeism; changes in patterns of attendance; recurrent short-term absences or long-term absence.

There is a host of helpful information to help to identify and deal with stress – try:
www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/understanding-stress.aspx
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mystress.htm

What can you do to prevent stress?

Be aware of factors which contribute to stress.

Take responsibility for yourself and your wellbeing. Examine your lifestyle and work patterns – sometimes small changes can make a huge difference. The following are examples of behaviours that can contribute to stress:

- eating on the run, or in a disorganised manner;
- smoking, or drinking excessively;
- rushing, hurrying, being available to everyone;

- doing several jobs at once;
- missing breaks, taking work home with you;
- having no time for exercise and relaxation.

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What to do if you feel stressed.

It may help to talk about your concerns, don't keep them bottled up and don't let them build up.

Ideally you should talk to your manager as soon as you are aware that it's becoming a problem. Explain how you are feeling and explore what reasonable actions could be taken to improve the situation. For example it may not be possible to alter the demands of the role, but sometimes minor adjustments can give you more of a sense of control over the way in which you work or the way in which you communicate can make a difference to your working relationships.

If you don't feel you can approach your manager, for example if it is your relationship with them which is causing you to feel stressed, you can contact HR or your trade union for guidance and support.

You can also refer yourself in confidence to the [Occupational Health Service](#) or to the [Counselling Service](#), or your GP.

The Counselling Service also runs a wide range of workshops to help you manage stress and improve your wellbeing.

What to do if you are off sick due to stress.

You must inform your manager at the earliest opportunity if you are off sick due to stress or a related condition.

Your manager is required to discuss this with you in order to find out the causes of your stress. It is important to try and get to the heart of what's causing you to feel stressed in order to identify what reasonable work-related actions might be taken to reduce further stress. For example it may not be possible to alter the demands of the role, but sometimes minor adjustments can give you more of a sense of control over the way in which you work or the way in which you communicate can make a difference to your working relationships.

After discussion your manager may refer you to the [Occupational Health Services](#). If for any reason an earlier referral has not been made, then your line manager will refer you after four weeks of absence.

Links to useful guidance

[The University Wellbeing Website](#)

[The University Counselling Service](#).

The Health and Safety Executive – www.hse.gov.uk/stress/furtheradvice/wrs.htm

[NHS - www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/understanding-stress.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/understanding-stress.aspx)