

Fact Sheet on Stress/Anxiety

Stress is a state of tension related to your body attempting to cope with its environment, it's the body's way of preparing to meet a tough situation. Anxiety is a sense of apprehension, dread and/or uneasiness. We tend to perceive anxiety and stress as negative, but in fact both are normal and can be adaptive. The stress response involves the nervous system and specific hormones in the body, and it enhances the ability to perform under pressure as well as avoid danger. It is when stress is excessive or ongoing and interfering with functioning that anxiety and stress become a problem. This can lead to wearing out the body's reserves and leaving a person feeling depleted or overwhelmed, weakening the immune system and making it harder to cope with daily demands. There are effective treatments available for anxiety and stress management. The first step is to learn to recognize when you are stressed, the next is to find a way to deal with stress.

Common symptoms of stress and/or anxiety:

- trouble catching your breath
- butterflies in your stomach
- sweaty and/or trembling hands
- feeling lightheaded
- feeling nervous or jumpy
- feeling overwhelmed
- feeling tired all the time
- having trouble concentrating
- irritability and moodiness
- headaches
- problems sleeping
- feeling sad or depressed

Problems related to anxiety and stress are among the most common reasons for people to see health professionals.

Any sort of change- good or bad, can make you feel stressed out.

You are more likely to experience difficulties with anxiety if someone in your family has an anxiety disorder.

Chronic stress lasting a month or more can put you more at risk of medical problems such as frequent headaches, viral illnesses and ulcers.

Avoiding situations that cause anxiety can make the anxiety worse.

Test taking anxiety is very common among students and there are strategies to help.

Physical exercise, eating a healthy balanced diet and a good sleep routine help reduce stress and anxiety.

Anxiety can put you more at risk of developing depression.