



A Guide to Stress

“In a Nutshell”



Many of you will know the common and normal symptoms of stress. There are other signs some of which may surprise you, signs that tell you it is time to look after you!

- **Cravings**
While stress causes some people to lose their appetite, others crave chocolate or junk foods, fizzy drinks, caffeine, nicotine and alcohol.
- **Cuts and bruises**
Have you ever discovered bruises or cuts on yourself and could not remember hurting yourself? They may have happened when you were stressed; it is also known that wounds do not heal as quickly when you are stressed.
- **Hair loss**
If the stress is great enough over a longer period of time some people may experience a degree of hair loss. This is mainly due to not having the right nutritional balance.
- **Rashes and itchy skin**
Skin conditions like eczema become worse under stress. Hence, when people are on holiday, their skin usually improves.
- **Stressed out skin**
If your skin tends to be dry, stress makes it drier and if you are inclined to spots, stress will also bring them out.
- **Chest pain and palpitations**
Stress can restrict breathing which affects blood pressure and heart rate. Fluttering or irregular heartbeats are not uncommon symptoms and are not usually a cause for concern in young and healthy people. However, if you are at all concerned, speak to your GP. Prolonged chest pains should be checked by your own GP.
- **Eyelid spasms**
Eyelids may start to twitch sometimes for a few minutes sometime for a day or so. This can also lead to stiffness in the neck and shoulders.
- **Ringling in the ears**
Stress can be the trigger that makes the ears send an abnormal stream of impulses which the brain interprets as tinnitus. Stress increases your awareness of tinnitus.
- **Irregular periods**
PMS stress can also upset hormonal balance. Premenstrual women are more sensitive than usual to hormonal changes.
- **Stomach problems**
IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) is a common symptom of stress.

Symptoms may be short-lived, but they can become chronic under persistent stress, causing pain, diarrhoea, bloating and may also cause mood swings.

How to combat stress

- If any of these symptoms apply to you ~ make a determined effort to look at what is going on in your life and how can you reduce some of the above symptoms.
- Recognise that you are currently experiencing common and normal symptoms to stress and be aware of the point at which you cannot give any more.
- Act on your early warning signs either by relaxing or injecting some activity into your life, like exercise ~ walking, swimming; work out classes or DVD's.
- Recognise what winds you up and, if it is not possible to eliminate it or learn new ways of dealing with it. Think positively about the person or problem that bothers you and refuse to be annoyed by negative comments.
- Delegate and prioritise or make a list of things to do. Put them in order of urgency and strike them off as you do them. Accept help and support.
- Learn to say no. Be more assertive and do not be afraid of letting people down - sometimes you must put yourself first. Do not take work home with you. You will be more efficient in the office if you take time off to relax.

