

Stress: Symptoms, Causes and Managing

Common Symptoms of Stress:

- Headaches
- Backaches
- Rapid heartbeat
- Fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping
- Recurring nightmares
- Irritability
- Loss of concentration

Common Causes of Stress:

- Health problems
- Financial concerns
- Communication issues at work and home
- Social isolation

It is important to investigate symptoms of stress as prolonged stress poses a potential health threat. Chronic stress is believed to raise the risk of increased blood pressure (hypertension), heart disease, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), chronic back pain, depression and a reduced immune response.

Effective steps for dealing with stress:

- Discuss your symptoms and your feelings about them
- Keep a diary to gain insight into your concerns and emotional patterns
- Exercise regularly engaging in both aerobic and weight training
- Practice relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation deep breathing exercises
- Maintain your immune system by eating well balanced meals, exercising regularly and getting sufficient sleep
- Avoid destructive behaviors, including overindulgence of alcohol, caffeine or smoking
- Seek professional help if any of your symptoms persist, interfering with your sense of well-being and/or your personal/work relationships.
- Medications:
 - **Recurrent acute anxiety** (episodic anxiety): *Diazepam (Valium)*, *Lorazepam (Ativan)*, or *Alprazolol (Xanax)*. These drugs work very rapidly to alleviate symptomatic anxiety and should not be taken for more than two weeks.
 - **Depression**: When anxiety is part of an underlying depression or a more generalized anxiety disorder the following medications may be considered: Selective serotonin-uptake inhibitors: Fluoxetine (*Prozac*), or Paroxetine (*Paxil*) or other antidepressant medication. These drugs can take up to six weeks to achieve their full therapeutic effect.
 - **Insomnia**: Zaleplon (*Sonata*), Zolpiden (*Ambien*) or Temazapan (*Restoril*) for short term use.