

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way. When you perceive a threat, your nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. This stress response is the body's way of defending itself. When working properly, it helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. But beyond a certain point, stress can begin causing major damage to your health and to the quality of your life.

CAUSES OF STRESS

The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as *stressors*. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship. However, anything that puts high demands on you or forces you to adjust can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, or receiving a promotion. What causes stress usually depends on your perception of it. For example, your morning commute may make you anxious because you worry that traffic will make you late. Others, however, may find the trip relaxing because they allow more than enough time and enjoy listening to music while they drive.

Common external causes of stress:

- Major life changes
- Work
- Relationships
- Financial problems
- Children and family

Common internal causes of stress:

- Inability to accept uncertainty
- Pessimism
- Negative self-talk
- Unrealistic expectations
- Perfectionism
- Lack of assertiveness

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

The signs and symptoms of stress overload can be almost anything. Stress affects the mind, body, and behavior in many ways and everyone experiences stress differently. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body. It can affect both your physical and mental well-being. You may find it difficult to concentrate at work, to cope with frustration, and even to control your temper. It can be physically exhausting and over time, these symptoms can result in chronic health problems affecting your immune, cardiovascular, and nervous systems.

Symptoms to be aware of include:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Insomnia or fatigue
- Heart pounding
- Weight gain or loss

COPING WITH STRESS

Left unchecked, stress is undeniably damaging, but there are many things you can do to reduce its impact and cope with symptoms. One way to deal with stress is to avoid the event that causes you stress – but of course this is often not possible. In most cases, the best way to manage stress is to change how you react to it.

Tips for successful stress management:

- Learn relaxation techniques (yoga/meditation)
- Set realistic goals at home and work
- Get regular exercise and sufficient rest
- Learn to manage your time and set priorities
- Take charge of things you can control
- Prepare for events you know may be stressful
- Seek professional help, if needed

Managing stress is all about taking charge; taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, and making time for rest and relaxation. Long-term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems. It is important to speak with your doctor if you think your symptoms may be stress-related. Together you can work on methods of managing your stress.

WHO IS RX OUTREACH?

Rx Outreach is a non-profit organization that provides affordable medications to people in need. Through the Rx Outreach Program, low-income, uninsured patients have access to over 650 prescription medication strengths through our mail order pharmacy. Rx Outreach serves individuals and families whose income is 300% or less of the federal poverty level. Each year we serve over 80,000 people across all fifty states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATIONS AVAILABLE ON RX OUTREACH

ALPRAZOLAM/DIAZEPAM/LORAZEPAM/CLONAZEPAM/BUSPIRONE