

STRESS AND ANXIETY



Stress

What is stress?

Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand.^{1a} Did you know that not all stress is bad?^{1a,2a}

If you think of animals and their natural stress response 'fight or flight' - it can be life-saving!^{2a}

However, chronic stress can cause both physical and mental harm.^{2a}

Types of stress

Stress can fall into different categories, these are:

- Routine stress related to the pressures of work, family, and other daily responsibilities.^{2b}
- Sudden stress brought about by a new or negative change, such as losing a job, divorce, or illness.^{2c}
- Adjustment disorder is failure to adapt to a stressor that causes significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.^{4b}
- Traumatic stress, which happens when in danger of being seriously hurt or killed. This type of stress can cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).^{2d}

Stress and health

Keeping the body in a 'high alert' stressed state over a long period of time puts a person at risk for health problems, including:^{1c,d}

- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- diabetes
- obesity
- depression or anxiety
- acne or eczema
- menstrual problems

If you already have a health condition, chronic stress can make it worse!^{1e}

More about Adjustment Disorder

An episode of adjustment disorder is commonly related to family or love life, work or school and financial stress.^{3b} Adjustment disorders are classified as trauma or stress-related disorders on the same scale as PTSD!^{3c} It is important to know that you can get treatment for these disorders.^{3d}

Coping with stress

Here are some tips to cope with stress: ⁵

- Recognise the signs of your body's response to stress, such as difficulty sleeping, being easily angered, feeling depressed, and having low energy.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist. Effective treatments can help if your stress is affecting your relationships or ability to function at work or at school.
- Get regular exercise. Just 30 minutes per day of walking can help boost your mood and improve your health.
- Try a relaxing activity. Try meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises.
- Set goals and priorities. Learn to say "no" to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much.
- Stay connected. You are not alone. Keep in touch with people who can provide emotional support and practical help.



What is anxiety?

Stress and anxiety can be inter-linked.^{1b}

Anxiety is stress that continues after the initial stress-factor has gone.^{1b}

As with stress, occasional anxiety is normal and not harmful.^{6a}

Anxiety can become a disorder if a person feels extremely worried or nervous when there is little or no reason to feel that way.^{6b}

How can you tell if you suffer from generalised anxiety disorder?

Typical signs and symptoms can develop slowly over time.^{6c}

People may:^{6d}

- feel restless with excessive worrying
- have a hard time concentrating
- feel easily tired
- have headaches, stomach aches or unexplained pains
- tremble or twitch
- be irritable or feel on edge
- sweat a lot or feel light-headed

What causes generalized anxiety disorder?

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) can run in families, but stress and environmental factors also play a role.^{6e}

Treating anxiety | what can YOU do?

The good news is that generalized anxiety disorder is treatable.^{6f,7a} Anxiety is generally treated with psychotherapy (talking with a therapist or counsellor), medication, or both.^{6g}

Medication

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and Serotonin-Norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) – these medicines are typically used to treat depression but are helpful for symptoms of anxiety. They may take several weeks to start working.^{6h}

Benzodiazepines – these are sedative medications, used to manage GAD. These medications are effective in rapidly decreasing anxiety, but they can cause tolerance and dependence if you use them continuously.⁶ⁱ

Non-benzodiazepine medicines – these are anti-anxiety medicines that do not cause the dependence or cognitive impairment/sedation of the benzodiazepines.^{3h,i,4c} They can be used as an alternative to benzodiazepines for short periods at a time, to help in times of high stress or anxiety, without any addiction problems.^{3h,i,7a}

Generalized anxiety disorder can affect all ages^{6l} and may become worse during times of stress.^{6j} Talk to your doctor about the best treatment for YOU.^{6g}

When to seek help

Visit your doctor if you feel overwhelmed by stress or anxiety about events in your life, or if it is affecting your health.^{1g} Your doctor can help you develop ways to reduce stress in your life or to help you cope with anxiety.^{1h}

Please note: This is an informational leaflet only and should not be used for diagnosis. For more information on Skin Infections, consult your healthcare professional.

References: 1. MedlinePlus. Stress and your health [Online; 06 November 2019] Available at: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003211.htm> Last accessed December 2019. 2. MedlinePlus. Stress [Online; 19 November 2019] Available at: <https://medlineplus.gov/stress.html> Last accessed December 2019. 3. Stein DJ. Etofexine Versus Alprazolam for the Treatment of Adjustment Disorder with Anxiety: a Randomized Controlled Trial. *Adv Ther* 2015;32:57–68. 4. Nuss P, Ferreri F, Bourin M, et al. An update on the anxiolytic and neuroprotective properties of etofexine: from brain GABA modulation to a whole-body mode of action. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment* 2019;15:1781–1795. 5. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). 5 Things You Should Know About Stress. Available at: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml> Last accessed December 2019. 6. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Generalized Anxiety Disorder: When Worry Gets Out of Control [Online; 2016] Available at: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad/index.shtml> Last accessed December 2019. 7. Reference available on request.

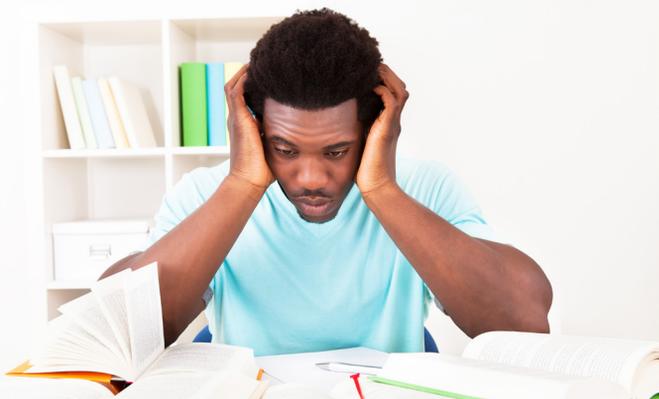
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