



# STRESS

## OVERVIEW

Stress is an aspect of health in which the brain reacts to a stimulus, releasing chemicals and hormones to the nervous system. Stress can be caused by anything that triggers a reaction, such as interactions with the environment and others, light, noise, and thoughts. When it relates to survival or protection from harm, this reaction is commonly referred to as the “fight or flight” response. While “distress” is stress that has more negative outcomes, stress that results in more positive outcomes such as excitement, an adrenaline rush fueling an athletic performance, or the motivation to be productive is referred to as “eustress.” The positive or negative nature of stress depends upon the frequency and intensity of the trigger, as well as one’s ability to cope or recover from a stressful event.<sup>1</sup>

Acute stress tends to be short-term, occurring multiple times a day and resulting in momentary changes in emotions. Episodic stress is experienced more frequently and often characterized by disorganization, hurriedness, over-involvement, and other self-imposed pressures. Chronic stress is the most extreme and traumatic type of stress that occurs in the long-term on a constant basis, and includes being “stuck” in unfavorable career, family, or financial circumstances. The effects of stress over time can be harmful to both the mind and body and at can, at worst, be fatal. In terms of mental health, emotions caused by stress can range from happiness and joy to anger, anxiety, depression, hostility, irritability, nervousness, tension, and worry. Physical symptoms of stress include constipation, dizziness, headache, heartburn, high blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, stomach pains. When experienced over longer periods of time, stress can result in migraines, heart disease, and hypertension.<sup>2</sup>

## RESOURCES

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-kinds.aspx>

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information, tools, and resources about stress, visit:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987>

<https://medlineplus.gov/stress.html>

<http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-relieving-stress>