

THE EFFECTS OF STRESS ON YOUR BODY

PRIMARY STRESS RESPONSE

IMMEDIATE & URGENT RESPONSE TO SERIOUS THREAT



MUSCLES: tense in readiness for action.

LUNGS: airways dilate, breathing intensifies to provide more oxygen to feed increased blood supply.

LIVER: glycogen converted to blood sugar to give 'short distance' energy.

BLADDER & RECTUM: Muscles relax to release any excess load.

DIGESTION: processes shut down as blood diverted elsewhere. Mouth goes dry to avoid adding extra fluids to stomach.

SKIN: pales as blood diverted to vital organs.

HEART: starts to pound sending blood around body carrying sugar (energy) & hormones (eg. adrenalin).

BLOOD: thickens to help it carry more oxygen, fight infection & stop bleeding.

SWEAT GLANDS: start up to cool the underlying and overheated muscles.

SECONDARY STRESS RESPONSE

ONGOING RESPONSE TO UNDEALT WITH STRESS



MUSCLES: ongoing tension leads to aches & pains, even muscle strain.

LUNGS: super-oxygenated blood can lead to blackouts and upset heart rhythms.

LIVER: body's own fats and proteins broken down and released to provide further energy.

DIGESTION: shutdown can lead to stomach problems, particularly if you eat on the run. Increase in acidity can contribute to stomach ulcers.

SKIN: less blood supply can lead to diseases developing.

HEART: racing heartbeat and high blood pressure can lead to strokes or heart attacks.

BLOOD: heart works harder due to thickened blood.

CHOLESTEROL: high cholesterol in blood can cause hardening of the arteries.

WARNING SIGNS:

BELOW ARE SOME OF THE MESSAGES OUR BODIES SEND TO TELL US WE'RE STRESSED

PHYSICAL

- Muscle tension/headaches
- Sleep disturbance/tiredness
- Increased 'breakouts'
- Rapid pulse
- Nausea
- Indigestion
- Increased Sweating
- Flushing (face feeling hot)

SECONDARY STRESS SIGNS

- Prolonged/Frequent headaches
- Susceptibility to mild illness
- Dizziness/Faintness
- Breathlessness/Chest Pain
- Ongoing Nausea/Stomach ache
- Ongoing Fitful Sleep

BEHAVIOURAL

- Appetite changes/ compulsive eating
- Impatience, Carelessness, Hyperactivity
- Poor productivity/Low energy
- Avoidance of situations/ places

SECONDARY STRESS SIGNS

- Increased alcohol, cigarette and drug use
- Increased absenteeism, aggression, irritability
- Sudden tears

EMOTIONAL

- Anxiety/Sadness
- Moodiness/Grumpiness
- Loss of sense of Humour
- Withdrawal/Feeling of isolation
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of guilt and shame

SECONDARY STRESS SIGNS

- Extreme anger (over-reaction)
- Loss of libido
- Overwhelming feelings of panic/anxiety

THOUGHTS/PERCEPTION

- Inability to make decisions or muddled thinking
- Reduced co-ordination/creativity
- Being more vague/forgetful
- Negative globalization: Everything seems to go wrong/is bad
- Fear of rejection/defensiveness
- Rushed decisions
- Over-sensitive to criticism

SECONDARY STRESS SIGNS

- Poor concentration
- Feelings of 'unfairness'
- Can't switch off
- Negative self-talk /fear of failure