



UNDERSTANDING STRESS



What Is Stress And How Does It Affect Your Health?

Stress can be defined as one of the body's responses to the ever-changing environment. It is the physical, mental, and emotional response people experience when under pressure. Stress can provide us with energy, motivation, and challenges that can be healthy and rewarding. It is how we perceive potentially stressful situations that determine if and/or how our body will react. When stressful situations overwhelm us on a continual basis, stress can become harmful.

What Causes Stress?

Stress means something different to everyone. If you are making commitments beyond your capacity, you may feel overwhelmed. Stress then becomes unhealthy and can lead to trouble.

- Are you always in a hurry?
- Are you often critical of yourself and others?
- Do you feel hostile or get angry easily?
- Are you highly competitive?
- Do you always feel responsible?
- Do you often bring home problems from your work environment?

What Are The Symptoms Of Stress?

When we are stressed our body may give us early signals:

- Chronic headaches, back, and neck pain
- Dizzy spells
- Persistent fatigue
- High blood pressure
- Irritability
- Overwhelming anxiety
- Sleep disturbances
- Changes in appetite

Who Feels Stress?

Virtually everyone in our society experiences stressful situations. There has never been a period in history when society has changed so quickly, and the pace of life is becoming faster all the time.

- Your credit card bill is in the 4-digit range
- You have not spoken to your children in weeks
- Traffic is a nightmare
- The economy is in a mess
- Work deadlines are approaching fast
- Love seems to come and go in your life

Do any of these sound familiar?

A major cause of stress can be a sudden or unpleasant change such as:

- Difficulty with your job or lack of job security
- Financial problems
- Changes in relationship or lifestyle
- Loss of a loved one

What Can We Do To Control Stress?

Knowing our own needs, and how to satisfy them, can help us to direct or manage stress. What motivates you? What fulfills you? What do you value? Can you use your energy so that energy comes back to you in the form of fulfilment? Stress management techniques include:

- Maintaining good health habits (exercise/health/diet/relaxation)
- Striking a balance between work and home life
- Going easy on self-criticism; learn to self-critique rather than self-criticize
- Learning to relax more through breathing exercises
- Improving work habits, learning how to prioritize and pace yourself
- Talking over problems with someone you know and trust
- Joining a volunteer group and making friends

If you are having problems managing your stress level and it is causing physical or emotional problems, you may want to contact the Canadian Mental Health Association Durham.

Where Can I Get Help?

If possible, schedule an appointment with your family doctor to address any concerns you may have. They may be able to address your concerns, refer you to a specialist, or provide other resources that may be able to assist you. You can also find information at the following:

www.anxietycanada.ca

http://helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm

www.durham.cmha.ca

Source: Adapted from Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division

*The Canadian Mental Health Association is a community based mental health service that provides support to people who have experienced mental health issues and their families and friends. These information sheets have been created by people in the community including individuals who have experienced mental health issues, family members and mental health practitioners. We recognize that there are many different perspectives about mental health issues and encourage people to increase their understanding by learning from a variety of sources. Hopefully, these information sheets will assist in raising community awareness and promote greater **UNDERSTANDING** of mental health issues.*



This information is of a general nature. For more information and resources please contact:

Phone: 905.436. 8760

60 Bond Street West, Oshawa ON L1G 1A5

www.cmhadurham.ca