

What can happen to our bodies when we are stressed



Brain

- ✓ The amygdala reacts to stress or threat by triggering the fight, flight or freeze response. Stress hormones are released including adrenaline and cortisol
- ✓ Cortisol causes blood sugar levels to rise and can affect mood and increase feelings of fear or worry
- ✓ Reduced executive function can make it harder to focus, concentrate, think clearly, understand cause and effect, remember things, manage emotions and show empathy
- ✓ Trouble sleeping, insomnia

Eyes

- ✓ Loss of peripheral vision
- ✓ Dilated pupils, tunnel vision
- ✓ High release of adrenaline can cause blurred vision

Heart

- ✓ Rapid heartbeat
- ✓ High blood pressure
- ✓ Long-term stress can contribute to higher cholesterol, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke

Lungs

- ✓ Breathing becomes quicker and shallower - to send more oxygen around your body
- ✓ Hyperventilation, panic attacks

Joints and muscles

- ✓ Inflammation
- ✓ Tension, aches and pains, muscle tightness
- ✓ Trembling/shaking - feeling wobbly
- ✓ Lower bone density



Immune system

- ✓ Weakened immune system
- ✓ More likely to catch illnesses such as coughs, colds and flu
- ✓ Inflammation
- ✓ Long-term stress can increase risk of autoimmune diseases

Headaches

Dry mouth

Feel tired and 'wobbly'



Ears

- ✓ Reduced blood circulation to the inner ear can sometimes affect hearing and balance
- ✓ Ear pain and pressure, tinnitus, vertigo

Skin

- ✓ Pale or flushed skin, sweaty palms
- ✓ High cortisol levels can trigger skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and acne
- ✓ Hair loss, dull/brittle hair, brittle nails

Liver

- ✓ Adrenaline causes a release of glucose to give you extra energy
- ✓ Long-term high cortisol levels can contribute to liver damage

Adrenal glands

- ✓ Release the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol into the bloodstream
- ✓ Release of noradrenaline increases heart rate and releases energy

Pancreas

- ✓ Long-term stress can make it harder for the body to control blood sugar levels and may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes

Stomach and gut

- ✓ Slowed digestion, 'butterflies'
- ✓ Stomach ache, nausea, bloating
- ✓ Constipation, diarrhoea, IBS
- ✓ Cortisol release suppresses digestion
- ✓ Indigestion, heartburn, acid reflux, ulcers
- ✓ Loss of appetite or eating too much