

Managing Stress: Introduction

What is Stress?

Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad things in your life. When people feel stressed, their bodies react. Chemicals are released into the blood. These chemicals give people more energy and strength. This can be a good thing if stress is caused by physical danger. But this can be a bad thing if stress is caused by something emotional. In this case, there may not be a way for you to get rid of the extra energy and strength. Stress can affect both your body and your mind. People under large amounts of stress can have the following signs and symptoms.



Signs of stress include:

- Apathy, lack of energy.
- Difficulty making decisions.
- Difficulty "keeping track" of things.
- Feeling on edge.
- A change in eating habits.
- Sleeping more than usual or difficulty getting to sleep.
- Being more emotional.
- Using alcohol or drugs to relieve or forget stress.

Symptoms of stress include:

- Chronic back pain.
- Tension headaches.
- Neck pain.
- Digestive problems (abdominal pain, diarrhea).
- Palpitations (heart racing).

[Answer a few questions to learn more about your stress level \(MDwise.org/stressquiz\)](https://www.mdwise.org/stressquiz). Talk to your primary medical provider about your results.

Sources:

American Psychological Association, American Heart Association, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health