

7 surprising ways stress affects your health

Whether it's a short-term frustration like a traffic jam or a major life event like divorce or job loss, psychological stress can affect our bodies. Stress can be highly personal, with one person's unpleasant experience another's exhilarating adventure. And a little bit of stress is thought to be good for memory and motivation. However, about 70 percent of doctor visits and 80 percent of serious illnesses may be exacerbated or linked to stress.

Here are some ways that stress can affect the body. The good news is that there is much you can do—exercise, meditation, and more—to reduce the impact of stress in your life.

1. Fight or flight

The stress response has evolved over a millennium to protect you from danger. Also known as the flight-or-flight response, it gets the body ready for action. So if you're in danger, the brain's hypothalamus sends triggers—both chemical and along the nerves—to the adrenals, which are glands that sit on top of each kidney like a hat perched on a head.

The adrenals then churn out hormones, such as cortisol, which raise blood pressure and blood sugar (among other things). This is dandy if you need to outrun a hungry lion, less so if the perceived threat is a looming layoff. And it can be harmful to health if sustained over time.

2. Cravings

Studies have linked cortisol, a hormone released during times of stress, to cravings for sugar and fat.

Scientists believe the hormone binds to receptors in the brain that control food intake. And if you already have a high body mass index, you may be even more susceptible.

The key is to know your triggers, and be ready when deadlines loom (or whenever stress is likely). That means, stock up on healthy snacks if you tend to hit the vending machine at work, or make sure you don't unhealthy treats on hand for those times when an attack of emotional eating is likely.

3. Fat storage

"You can clearly correlate stress to weight gain," says Philip Hagen, MD, an assistant professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Part of that link is due to poor eating during stress, but the stress hormone cortisol may also increase the amount of fat tissue your body hangs onto and enlarge the size of fat cells. Higher levels of cortisol have been linked to more deep-abdominal fat—yes, belly fat.

Luckily, exercise can help control stress and help keep belly fat under control.

4. Heart

The exact relationship between stress and heart attack is still unclear, but evidence is mounting that there is one. A recent study of 200,000 employees in Europe found that people who have stressful jobs and little decision-making power at work are 23% more likely to have a first heart attack than people with less job-related stress.

The best thing to do is lead a heart-healthy lifestyle and focus on reducing stress in your life. Here are 12 steps you can take to help your heart by combatting stress.

5. Insomnia

Stress can cause hyperarousal, a biological state in which people just don't feel sleepy. While major stressful events can cause insomnia that passes once the stress is over, long-term exposure to chronic stress can also disrupt sleep and contribute to sleep disorders.

What to do? Focus on sleep hygiene (making your surroundings conducive to a good night's rest) and try yoga or another stress-busting activity during the day.

6. Headaches

"Fight or flight" chemicals like adrenaline (epinephrine) and cortisol can cause vascular changes that leave you with a tension headache or migraine, either during the stress or in the "let-down" period afterwards.

Stress also makes your muscles tense, which can make the pain of a migraine worse. Beyond treating the headache itself, focus on headache-proofing your home, diet, and lifestyle in general.

7. Memory

Too much of the stress hormone cortisol can interfere with the brain's ability to form new memories. During acute stress, the hormone also interferes with neurotransmitters, the chemicals that brain cells use to communicate with each other. That can make it hard to think straight or retrieve memories.

While it's tough to limit stress in our hectic lives, some experts recommend trying meditation, among other solutions.

SOURCE: <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2012/11/28/7-surprising-ways-stress-affects-your-health.html#sanctions>



DAMAGE TO VEHICLES - update

NTEU was informed by the ED: HR, Ms Ntoza Bam, as follows:

"Please be informed that the university regrets the damage to a number of staff vehicles on campus during the recent student protests for free education. To this end, the university is making a concession, as a gesture of goodwill, to assist affected staff with ex gratia payments without any admission of liability on the part of the university."

Affected staff have been requested to contact their HR Consultants to lodge their claim."

Whilst NTEU is grateful for the decision, we have not been informed how such ex gratia payments will be calculated and as such, we cannot advise whether this is in fact acceptable. We have therefore sought advice from legal counsel.

Mr Craig Jessop will be meeting with those staff members who have reported the damage to their vehicles to our offices, on 24 November 2016. A calendar invitation was sent on 23 November 2016.



REMINDER CHANGING MEDICAL AID OPTIONS

Medical Aid year end revision sessions were held between 25 Oct and 4 Nov 2016.

Members are reminded that you may still change from one medical aid option to another **before 30 November 2016**.

Such changes must be communicated in writing to Ms Tarryn Vermaak tarryn.vermaak@nmmu.ac.za OR medicalaid@nmmu.ac.za.