

The Effects of STRESS on your Body

SKIN: pales as blood diverted to vital organs.

HEART: begins to pound, sending blood around body carrying sugar (energy) and hormones (eg. adrenalin)

SKIN: less blood supply can lead to diseases developing.

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

PRIMARY STRESS RESPONSE

IMMEDIATE & URGENT RESPONSE to SERIOUS THREAT

MUSCLES: tense in readiness for action.

LUNGS: air passage dilates, breathing more intense to provide more oxygen to feed increase blood supply.

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



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

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

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

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

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.



BLOOD: heart works harder due to thickened blood.

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

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

WARNING SIGNS:

Below are some of the messages our bodies send to tell us we're stressed.

KEY: Early Warning Signs, *Secondary Stress Signs in italics*

PHYSICAL

- Muscle tension/headaches
- Sleep disturbance/tiredness
- Increased 'breakouts'
- Rapid pulse
- Nausea
- Indigestion
- Increased Sweating
- Flushing (face feeling hot)
- *Prolonged/Frequent headaches*
- *Susceptibility to mild illness*
- *Dizziness/Faintness*
- *Breathlessness/Chest Pain*
- *Ongoing Nausea/Stomach ache*
- *Ongoing fitful Sleep*

BEHAVIORAL

- Appetite changes/compulsive eating
- Impatience, Carelessness, Hyperactivity
- Poor productivity/Low energy
- Avoidance of situations/places
- *Change in sleeping patterns*
- *Increased alcohol, cigarette and drug use*
- *Increased absenteeism, aggression, irritability*
- *Sudden tears*

EMOTIONAL

- Anxiety/Sadness
- Moodiness/Grumpiness
- Loss of sense of Humor
- Withdrawal/Feeling of isolation
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- *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
- Becoming more vague/forgetful
- Negative 'globalization'. Everything seems to go wrong/is bad
- Fear of rejection/defensiveness
- Rushed decisions
- Over-sensitive to criticism
- *Poor concentration*
- *Negative self-talk/fear of failure*
- *Feelings of 'unfairness'*
- *Can't switch off*