

# The Effects of STRESS on your Body

## 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.

**SKIN:** pales as blood diverted to vital organs.



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

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

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

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

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

## SECONDARY STRESS RESPONSE

ONGOING RESPONSE to UNDEALT WITH STRESS

**SKIN:** less blood supply can lead to diseases developing.

**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.

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



**BLOOD:** heart works harder due to thickened blood.

**CHOLESTEROL DEPOSITS:** plague 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*

### BEHAVIOURAL

- 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, addictive*
- *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*