Stress in one page

What it is

What is stress?

Stress is your body's normal response to new or hard situations. Some stress helps you rise to a challenge, but it becomes a problem when it lasts a long time or you feel unable to cope. Stress on its own is not a diagnosis.

- Stress is a normal response to hard situations
- Some stress helps you meet a challenge
- Stress is a problem when it lasts or overwhelms you

The signs

What are the symptoms of stress?

Stress shows up in your mind as worry, feeling on edge, poor focus and irritability, and in your body as poor sleep, tiredness, headaches, tight muscles and an upset stomach. It becomes a problem when it lasts or you feel unable to cope.

- Feeling overwhelmed is a common sign of stress
- Stress can disturb your sleep and appetite
- Headaches and tight muscles can come from stress

Where to start

What can a GP do about stress?

Quite a lot, and an ordinary visit needs no diagnosis. Your GP can check for other causes, write a certificate and point you to a free service. Without a plan, they cannot refer you for rebated psychology.

- Book a long appointment. Visits can run `60 minutes` or more.
- A GP can write you a certificate for work.
- A GP visit can end with a follow-up visit booked.

Treatment

What free help is there for stress?

Three free services you can start yourself, with no plan: a Medicare Mental Health Centre, MindSpot's online assessment and courses, and THIS WAY UP's Stress Management program.

Medication

I already take medicine. What do I tell my GP, and do I keep taking it?

Keep taking it, and do not stop a prescribed medicine suddenly or on your own. Tell your GP every medicine you take, and bring a list. If your GP refers you on, the referral lists your current medicines. Your current prescriber stays in charge of that medicine. No Australian source we read names a medicine for burnout itself.

- Do not stop a prescribed medicine on your own
- Bring a list of every medicine you take
- Your current prescriber stays in charge

Read next

- Can I get a mental health plan for stress? →
- Is stress leave a real thing? →
- What goes on a medical certificate for stress? →
- What goes in my record if I say I'm stressed? →
- Is a financial counsellor really free? →
- Can I get a JobSeeker exemption because of stress? →
- The stress quiz →

Find these at haihealth.au/blog/stress

In danger? Call `000`. Lifeline `13 11 14`, text `0477 13 11 14`, or chat online.

Suicide Call Back Service `1300 659 467`. Free counselling by phone or video, any hour.

Navigation, not diagnosis: this site is general information and is not a substitute for professional advice. Written by Hai from published sources. No clinician has reviewed these pages.

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